THE MAKERS OF CHRISTENDOM

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# St. Odo of Cluny

*Being the Life of St. Odo of Cluny*
*by John of Salerno and the*
*Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac*
*by St. Odo*

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

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# THE LIFE OF ST. GERALD OF AURILLAC BY ST. ODO OF CLUNY

## Dedicatory Epistle of the Author

To the Father Abbot Aymo[1] in affectionate remembrance of his merits, Odo the servant of the brethren, everlasting salvation in Christ. I am undertaking, venerable Father, as best I can and with much trepidation, the little book which you recently urged me so strongly to write concerning the life and miracles of the holy man Gerald. On the one hand I fear to be presumptuous in undertaking something beyond my capacity; on the other hand, in not doing it I fear greatly to be contumacious by being disobedient. I undertake the task, however, relying on the obedience and the goodness of Christ, and I beseech you to implore His mercy, that for the love of His servant Gerald He would deign so to guide what I say, that it may not be entirely unworthy of the man He has seen fit to glorify, and that to me it may not be a cause of transgression. To avoid such transgression I pass over some things for which perhaps you will blame me, and set down those things only which were made known to me by sure authorities and when you also were present. Farewell.

[1] He was the abbot of the monastery of St. Martial at Limoges from 936 to his death in 942 (Sackur, vol. i, p. 81). The "canons" of St. Martial at Limoges became monks in the middle of the ninth century. The monastery evidently suffered in the invasions of the Norsemen, for we learn later (ch. 39) that the treasury of the abbey was removed to Turenne. Odo was instrumental in the restoration of monastic life there (Sackur, vol. i, p. 81).

## Preface

Many doubt whether the things that are said about the blessed Gerald are true, and some think that they are certainly not true but fantastic. Others, as though seeking excuses for their sins, extol him indiscreetly, saying that Gerald was powerful and rich, and lived well, and is certainly a saint. They strive indeed to excuse their luxurious lives by his example. It seemed to me therefore that I ought to reply a little to these according to my ability. For I too, formerly, hearing the fame of his miracles, was nevertheless in doubt, and for this reason chiefly, that stories get about here and there, through I know not what channels, and are then gradually discredited as empty. But when cause arose that I should visit the community of the monastery at Tulle,[1] I was glad to go to his tomb, and then having summoned four of those whom he had brought up, namely the monk Hugh, the priest Hildebert, and two well-born laymen, Witard and another Hildebert, along with many others, I investigated his behaviour and the quality of his life in detail. Now with the others, now alone, I carefully investigated what each one said and whether they agreed, silently pondering if his life was one in which miracles were fitting. Having learnt how religiously he lived and that God had shown this man to be in His grace by many signs, I could no longer doubt of his sanctity. I marvel rather, that in this age of ours, when charity has almost entirely grown cold, and the time of anti-Christ is at hand, the miracles of the saints should not cease, but He is mindful of the promise, that He makes by Jeremias: *I will not cease to do good to my people.* [Jer. xxxii. 40.] And of this good that He has done the Apostle bears witness, when he says that God, not leaving Himself in any age without a witness [Acts xiv. 16], in His kindness fills the hearts of men with joy. If, therefore, it pleases the divine goodness, that He who did wonderful things for our fathers,

[1] This was another of the monasteries which Odo restored (Sackur, vol. i, p. 78), and it was no doubt in connexion with this that he was visiting it when he became interested in the history of St. Gerald. Tulle lies about fifty miles north-west of Aurillac, and half-way between that town and Limoges.

should be glorified also in our times, we ought by no means to be incredulous. For it seems that the divine dispensation performs these things in our age and through a man of our time, because everything which the saints did or said in the past has been forgotten. And since, as in the days of Noe, a man of God was found, who lived according to the law, God set him up as an example to those who saw him, that their hearts should be inspired to imitate one who was their neighbour, and whom they saw to live a just and pious life. And let not the observance of the commandments of God seem hard or impossible, since it is seen to have been achieved by a layman of great position. For nothing more encourages mental cowardice than that the retribution of good or evil works, which is to follow in the next life, should not be meditated upon in the present. And against this Scripture warns us that in all our actions we should remember our last end [Ecclus. vii. 40]. God, therefore, exalts on earth in the sight of his contemporaries the servant whom He rewards in heaven, so that by that which is done outwardly the contemners of God may see inwardly that God is not served in vain, but that as He Himself testifies, He will glorify those who glorify Him, and bring down in shame those who despise Him. [1 Kings ii. 30.] Since, therefore, I believe this man of God to have been given as an example to the mighty, let them see how they may imitate him as one of themselves held up for their example, lest perchance, as the Queen of the South the Jews, he shall condemn them in the day of judgement [Luke xi, 31]. Taking occasion from his actions, I have added something by way of admonition to those same mighty ones, where opportunity has arisen, as you asked me. And indeed Bishop Turpio[1] and the venerable Abbot Aymo, who is most dear to me, with many others, have driven me with urgent prayers to undertake this. When I would have put forward the true excuse of lack of skill, they said that they preferred matter such as this to be put forth in an unpolished style, and I considering that a grandiose style little

[1] He was Bishop of Limoges. We learn from the dedicatory epistle to Odo's *Collations* that he was the bishop at whose instigation Odo wrote, and as the *Collations* is evidently the work referred to in John's *Life*, bk. i, ch. 37, he was the bishop who ordained Odo priest. He was the brother of Abbot Aymo (Duchesne, annotations to *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis* (Marrier) *ad. loc.*; *PL* cxxxiii, 639).



fitted a humble man, have put my faith in the words of witnesses, who have recorded not many of the miracles, which ordinary men think of great moment, but rather a disciplined way of life, and not a few works of mercy pleasing to God. For in the judgement the king will say to many who prophesied and who did great things: *I know you not.* [Matt. xxv. 12.] But those who execute justice, in which Gerald excelled, are to hear *Come ye, blessed of my father* [Matt. xxv. 34]. And in truth the things which were done by Job, David, and Tobias, and many others, and through which they are blessed, are not those which Gerald is shown to have done. Having considered all this I was persuaded to believe that Gerald (through whom the heavenly Giver of gifts deigns to work miracles) is worthy of the company of the saints. But in making this apology in the preface I have spoken too long; now in the name of Christ let us come to the beginning of our tale.

# Book I

## 1

The man of God, Gerald, took his origin from that part of Gaul which was called by the ancients *Celtica*,[1] in the territory which marches with that of Auvergne and Cahors and Albi, in the town or village of Aurillac. His father was Gerald, his mother Adaltruda.[2] He was so illustrious by the nobility of his birth, that among the families of Gaul his lineage is outstanding both for its possessions and the excellence of its life. For it is said that his parents held modesty and religion as a sort of hereditary dowry. Two witnesses among his ancestors are themselves sufficient to prove the point: namely St. Caesarius, the Bishop of Arles, and the holy Abbot Aredius.[3] And because the Lord is in the generation of the just [Ps. xiii. 6], the generation of Gerald is of those who seek the Lord; and so the righteous generation is blessed. And indeed the great quantity of estates endowed with serfs, lying in various places, which came to Gerald by right of succession,[4] testifies to

[1] Caesar divided the Gauls into the Aquitani, the Belgae, and the Celticae. The latter occupied the country from the lowlands of Switzerland through the uplands of central France to the Atlantic seaboard north of the Garonne. Aurillac lies in the midst of this country towards the south-west of the *Massif Central*, where the rivers begin to flow away to the West to join the Dordogne and the Atlantic at Bordeaux. One does not know exactly what Odo understood by the territories in question, and Albi particularly would seem rather far to the south, but the position of Aurillac roughly corresponds with his description. It belonged essentially to the Aquitaine of the tenth century. (See p. 6, *n.* 1).

[2] Very little is really known about Gerald's parentage. Odo puts the saints mentioned below among the families of his ancestors, but there is no other authority for this. Mabillon (*Acta*, vol. vii, p. 6, *PL*, cxxxiii, 703) says that others, whom he does not name, state that his grandmother was Mathilda, the daughter of Peppin. However this may be, as he says, it is evident that Gerald's father was a well-to-do landowner, though it appears that he did not have the title of count. (See p. 122, *n.* 1). The date of Gerald's birth appears to be established as 855 (Mabillon, *loc. cit.*).

[3] St. Caesarius (470-543) was the foremost bishop of his day in Gaul, and ruled the Church of Arles for forty years. St. Aredius was Abbot of St. Yrier near Limoges at the end of the sixth century. (Mabillon, *Acta*, vol. i, p. 349.)

[4] The feudal system of land tenure, if followed into all its details, was exceedingly complex, and varied much between different places and times, but the main principles remained unchanged throughout. There were two types of holding. One was completely free and entailed no obligation of any kind to another man. Property held in such a way was said to be allod (*alodus*) and it was, of course, hereditary. Some of Gerald's property was of this nature. (See bk. i, ch. 41). The other type of holding was that which in general entailed a



the extent of their riches. But in him the beauty of mind which he inherited from his parents shone forth much augmented. With what grace were his parents endowed, who merited to beget so excellent an offspring!

## 2

His father was so careful to conduct himself chastely in his marriage, that he frequently slept alone far from the marriage bed, as though for a time giving himself to prayer according to the word of the Apostle [1 Cor. vii. 5]. He is said to have been warned in sleep on a certain night that he should know his wife, because he was to beget a son, and they say that it was announced to him that he should call his name Gerald, and that he would be a man of great virtue. When he awoke he was full of joy at the vision. Having fallen asleep again it seemed to him that a rod grew up from the big toe of his right foot, which gradually grew into a great tree, which burst into leaf and spread itself on all sides. Then seeming to call workmen he ordered props in the form of forks or poles to be put underneath it. And even when it grew very great, he felt no weight on his toe. In truth visions of dreams are not always vain. And if faith is to be put in sleep, it seems that this vision agrees in its result with future events. He knew his wife, who conceived a son as the vision foretold. The dream may perhaps be doubted, but the mark of virtue evidently followed.

## 3

When his mother was near to giving birth, on the ninth day before he was born, it happened that she and her husband were lying

certain obligation to another man. This was the characteristic feudal holding, in which property was held as what was known at this time as a benefice, and later became known as a fief. The holder of a benefice did homage for it and was the vassal of the man who was the real owner. Originally it was given to him to provide for his maintenance in return for the military service which he gave the lord, and it was not hereditary, though by this time (end of ninth century) it had probably become so in most cases. Gerald, we know, was a royal vassal (bk. i, ch. 32), which meant that he held some of his estates as a benefice from the king and it is probable that already at this time he would succeed his father in these. When a man became a vassal he was said to *commend* himself to his lord. The vassal was essentially a free man who entered into a free contract carrying mutual obligations, and his service was military.

awake. And while they were talking about I know not what, the child cried out so that both heard it. Lost in astonishment, they were dumbfounded as to what it might be—yet they could not but know that the voice sounded in the womb of the mother. The father called the waiting-woman and ordered her to search with a light for the place where the crying came from. When, equally astonished, she protested that there was no child present to have uttered the cry, the child cried a second time. And after a short interval it cried a third time, as a child recently born is accustomed to cry. Three times, therefore, he was heard in the womb of his mother, and assuredly this is a strange thing which certainly happened against the course of nature. And because it happened not by chance but by the dispensation of God, the Ruler of nature, perhaps that voice presaged that his actions in the prison of his mortality were to be of great moment. For as the child in the womb of his mother lives indeed, but is not conscious, so after the guilt of the first man the whole human race on earth is confined as in the narrowness of the womb, and although by faith it lives in the hope of the glory of the sons of God, nevertheless it scarcely performs, except in a languid manner, any act of the senses like seeing, nor can it make use of the senses in the way that the first man did before sin, or the saints do after this life.[1] Gerald therefore did well to cry in the womb of his mother, because acting in the faith of the Holy Trinity beyond the common vigour of men, he signified by that small voice the happy fame with which he was to fill the world.

## 4

When he had been born, then, and weaned, and had come to that age in which the character of children may usually be discerned, a certain pleasing quality began to show itself in him, by which those who looked closely conjectured of what virtue the future man should be. For at an early age, as we often see, children through the incitements of their corrupt nature are accustomed to be angry

[1] This theologically inexact statement about the saints may be compared with what John of Salerno says of St. Martin and St. Benedict. See introduction, p. xix.



and envious, and to wish to be revenged, or to attempt other things of this sort. But in the child Gerald a certain sweetness and modesty of mind, which especially graces youth, adorned his childish acts. By the grace of divine providence he applied himself to the study of letters, but by the will of his parents only to the extent of going through his psalter; after that he was instructed in the worldly exercises customary for the sons of the nobility; to ride to hounds, become an archer, learn to fly falcons and hawks in the proper manner. But lest given to useless pursuits the time suitable for learning letters should pass without profit the divine will ordained that he should be a long time sick, though with such a sickness that he should be withdrawn from worldly pursuits but not hindered in his application to learning. And for a long time he was so covered with small pimples that it was not thought that he could be cured. For this reason his father and mother decided that he should be put more closely to the study of letters, so that if he should prove unsuited for worldly pursuits, he might be fitted for the ecclesiastical state.[1] So it came about that he not only learnt the chant, but also learnt something of grammar. And this was afterwards of much use to him, since, perfected by that exercise, his wits were sharpened for whatever he might wish to apply them to. He had a lively and discerning mind, and was not slow to learn anything to which he set himself.

## 5

While he was growing up his bodily strength consumed the harmful humours of his body. So agile was he that he could vault over the backs of horses with ease. And because, endowed with bodily strength as he was, he became very active, it was demanded of him that he accustom himself to military service. But the sweet-

[1] The information about Gerald's education is of interest. It may be noted that his parents did not envisage his being able to read anything beyond the psalter, until it became doubtful whether he would be able to take his place as an upper-class layman—for which physical fitness was essential. The only alternative was the ecclesiastical state, and any further education was necessarily identified with this. The learned layman was apparently not contemplated. Nothing is said about Gerald's learning to write, and it is probable that he never did.

ness of the Scriptures, to the study of which he was greatly attracted, held his mind in pledge, so that, although he excelled in military exercises, nevertheless it was the charm of letters which attracted him. In the former by a voluntary sloth he was a little slow, in the latter he was assiduous.[1] I believe now he began to perceive that according to the testimony of Scripture, wisdom is better than strength [Wisd. vi. 1], and that nothing is more precious. And because it is easily perceived by those that love it, wisdom took possession of his mind to reveal itself to him and to be the sweet expression of his thought. Nothing was able to hinder Gerald from hastening to the love of learning. So it came about that he learnt almost the whole series of the Scriptures and surpassed many clerical smatterers in his knowledge of it.

## 6

After the death of his parents, when he attained full power over his property, Gerald was not puffed up, as youths often are who boast of their grown-up mastery, nor did he change the modesty which was springing up in his heart. His power of ruling increased, but the humble mind did not grow haughty. He was compelled to be occupied in administering and watching over things[2] which, as I have said, came to him by hereditary right, and to leave that peace of heart, which he had to some extent tasted, to take up the weariness of earthly business. He could scarcely bear to leave the inner solitude of his heart, and he returned to it as soon as he could. But while he seemed to fall headlong from the heights of contemplation to the occupations of earth, as the chamois in its

[1] He had evidently recovered from his affliction, but in the meantime had developed a taste for reading the Scriptures. The theological learning of the time was, of course, practically confined to the Scriptures and commentaries on them, mostly taken from the Fathers. See Smalley, ch. 2.

[2] In Merovingian times and under Charles the Great the country was divided into districts in each of which a royal official, called the count, was responsible for judicial, military, and financial matters. By Gerald's time the counts were no longer royal officials, but the large local landowners performed their functions and assumed their titles. Gerald is frequently shown performing the judicial office of a count and it is interesting to see a reference to his actually assuming the title (i, 32, p. 122). In many cases, no doubt, the counts were the descendants of men originally appointed by royal authority. The performance of the functions had become hereditary, but they now did it in their own interests and not those of the king.



fall saves itself from death by its horns, so, turning to the divine love and the meditation of Holy Scripture he escaped the ruin of spiritual death. Inspired, as I think, by the very spirit of David, in his fervour he gave no sleep to his eyes, until freed from daily activities he might find within himself a place for the Lord, and exulting in it secretly he tasted how sweet the Lord is [Ps. xxxiii. 9]. Perchance according to that saying of Job, Christ, the Rock, poured forth rivers of oil for him [Job xxix. 6], lest many waters should be able to extinguish in him the light of charity [Cant. viii. 7]. Dragged down to earth, he yearned for this spiritual refreshment, but his household and dependants demanded that he should break into his repose and give himself to the service of others.

## 7

He admitted these gnawing cares unwillingly for the sake of the complaints of those who had recourse to him. For his dependants pleaded querulously saying: "Why should a great man suffer violence from persons of low degree who lay waste his property?", adding that, when these discovered that he did not wish to take vengeance they devoured the more greedily that which was rightfully his. It would be more holy and honest that he should recognize the right of armed force, that he should unsheathe the sword against his enemies, that he should restrain the boldness of the violent; it would be better that the bold should be suppressed by force of arms than that the undefended districts should be unjustly oppressed by them. When Gerald heard this he was moved, not by the attack made on him but by reason, to have mercy and to give help. Committing himself entirely to the will of God and the divine mercy, he sought only how he might visit the fatherless and widows and hold himself unspotted from this world, according to the precept of the Apostle. [James i. 27.]

## 8

He therefore exerted himself to repress the insolence of the violent, taking care in the first place to promise peace and most easy reconciliation to his enemies. And he did this by taking care, that

either he should overcome evil by good, or if his enemies would not come to terms, he should have in God's eyes the greater right on his side. And sometimes indeed he soothed them and reduced them to peace. When insatiable malice poured scorn on peaceful men, showing severity of heart, he broke the teeth of the wicked [Ps. lvii, 7], that, according to the saying of Job, he might snatch the prey from their jaws. [Job xxix 17.] He was not incited by the desire for revenge, as is the case with many, or led on by love of praise from the multitude, but by love of the poor, who were not able to protect themselves. He acted in this way lest, if he became sluggish through an indolent patience, he should seem to have neglected the precept to care for the poor. He ordered the poor man to be saved and the needy to be freed from the hand of the sinner. Rightly, therefore, he did not allow the sinner to prevail. But sometimes when the unavoidable necessity of fighting lay on him, he commanded his men in imperious tones, to fight with the backs of their swords and with their spears reversed. This would have been ridiculous to the enemy if Gerald, strengthened by divine power, had not been invincible to them. And it would have seemed useless to his own men, if they had not learnt by experience that Gerald, who was carried away by his piety in the very moment of battle, had not always been invincible. When therefore they saw that he triumphed by a new kind of fighting which was mingled with piety, they changed their scorn to admiration, and sure of victory they readily fulfilled his commands. For it was a thing unheard of that he or the soldiers who fought under him were not victorious. But this also is certain, that he himself never wounded anybody, nor was wounded by anyone. For Christ, as it is written, was at his side [Ps. cxvii. 6], who seeing the desire of his heart, saw that for love of Him he was so well-disposed that he had no wish to assail the persons of the enemy, but only to check their audacity. Let no one be worried because a just man sometimes made use of fighting, which seems incompatible with religion. No one who has judged his cause impartially will be able to show that the glory of Gerald is clouded by this. For some of the Fathers, and of these the most holy and most patient, when the cause of justice demanded, valiantly took up arms against their adversaries, as Abraham, who



destroyed a great multitude of the enemy to rescue his nephew [Gen. xiv], and King David who sent his forces even against his own son. [2 Kings xviii.] Gerald did not fight invading the property of others, but defending his own, or rather his people's rights, knowing that the rhinoceros, that is, any powerful man, is to be bound with a thong that he may break the clods of the valley, that is, the oppressors of the lowly. [Job xxxix. 10.][1] For, as the Apostle says, *the judge beareth not the sword in vain; for he is God's avenger* [Rom. xiii. 4]. It was lawful, therefore, for a layman to carry the sword in battle that he might protect defenceless people, as the harmless flock from evening wolves according to the saying of Scripture [Acts xx. 29], and that he might restrain by arms or by the law those whom ecclesiastical censure was not able to subdue. It does not darken his glory, then, that he fought for the cause of God, for whom the whole world fights against the unwise. [Wisd. v. 21.] Rather is it to his praise that he always won openly without the help of deceit or ambushes, and nevertheless was so protected by God, that, as I said before, he never stained his sword with human blood. Hereafter, let him who by his example shall take up arms against his enemies, seek also by his example not his own but the common good. For you may see some who for love of praise or gain boldly put themselves in danger, gladly sustain the evils of the world for the sake of the world, and while they encounter its bitterness lose the joys, so to speak, which they were seeking. But of these it is another story. The work of Gerald shines forth, because it sprang from simplicity of heart.

## 9

THE old deceiver had made trial of the virtue of the youth, and having found I know not what of the divine in him, burst out in envy, and for this reason strove to overthrow him by all the tricks of temptation that were in his power. But Gerald had learnt to flee in prayer to the bosom of the divine love, and relying on the grace of Christ to refute the fabrications of the evil one. But

[1] The application of this curious text is obscure. Surprisingly, Gerald is the rhinoceros, apparently, who breaks the oppressors of the lowly.

insatiably envious, the enemy, when he had found by experience that he could exercise no power over him through the delectation of the flesh, raised up the tempest of war against him by means of wicked men, as I have described above,[1] so that by this means he might capture the citadel of his heart, into which by himself he was in no way able to enter. To return to his youth—the cunning foe was most actively inflamed against that chastity which Gerald earnestly loved. For it was something new and unaccustomed to him that a youth should have avoided completely the shipwreck of his purity. He constantly suggested lustful thoughts to him therefore, for that is his first and greatest means of leading mankind astray. When Gerald completely repelled them, the enemy suffered tortures, because he could not introduce them even to the portals of his heart. And so he repeated the old fraud and had recourse to the instrument of deception by which Adam and his posterity are most often led astray—I mean woman. He brought, it is said, a certain girl before his eyes and while Gerald incautiously took notice of the colour of her clear skin, he was softened to take delight in it. O, if he had at once understood what lay hidden beneath the skin! For the beauty of the flesh is nothing but the thin disguise of the skin. He averted his eyes but the image impressed on the heart through them remained. He was tortured therefore, allured, and consumed by a blind fire. Overcome at length, he sent word to the mother of the girl that he would come by night. He followed the messenger, violently hastened to the death of his soul. Meanwhile, as captives in chains remember with groans their former liberty, with sighs Gerald remembered the familiar sweetness of the divine love. And though but weakly, he asked God that he should not be entirely swallowed up by this temptation. Gerald came to the agreed place, and the girl entered the room; because he was cold he stood at the hearth facing her; divine grace looked on him, and this same girl appeared to him so deformed that he did not believe it was she whom he saw, until her father asserted that it was so. Understanding that this did not happen without the divine assent, that the same girl should no longer have the same

[1] The reference seems to be rather to the anecdotes given in the later chapters of this book, 35-40.



beauty in his eyes, he soon betook himself once more to the mercy of Christ, and sighing deeply he got on to his horse, and giving thanks to God rode away musing. Perhaps he who had allowed himself to be on fire for a whole night, was now assailed by too great coldness, that a harsh frigidity might punish the warmth of a slight delectation. He ordered the father forthwith to give the girl in marriage, presented her with her liberty, and granted her a small holding.[1] Perhaps suspecting his weakness, he had her marriage hurried on, and this was the reason that, as an alms, he gave her the dowry of her liberty, lest her marriage should be delayed. You who were to grow into a cedar of paradise, how could you be so agitated? Surely that you might learn what you might be, left to yourself. For your patron, the Prince of the Apostles, to whom afterwards you committed yourself and all you possessed, would not have had sufficient knowledge of himself, if the critical moment of temptation had not come upon him. But now that you know by experience what a man may be by himself and what by the grace of God, do not scorn to have compassion on the weakness of your supplicants. We know that it is not unusual for the saints to be tempted, for the vices inherent in their corrupt nature come to life, that wherever they strive they may conquer, and conquering be crowned. For there is a difference between one who feels the delight of vice and gives way, and one who fighting against it conquers, and occupying his mind rather with the pleasure of virtue drives out the poison of an evil delight, which perhaps he has for a time imbibed, with the antidote of pious supplication. And the youth, more discreet for the experience of this danger, like a man who has knocked his foot in a slippery place, walked more cautiously, being careful that the eyes should announce nothing to the heart, by means of which death might find entrance through the windows of the soul. [Jer. ix. 21.]

[1] The parents of the girl were evidently serfs, and it would be normal that she should not be able to marry without the lord's consent.

10

FOR the rest, the kind and just Lord, who by the attractiveness of holiness, kept his servant Gerald from defilement, did not omit to punish his concupiscence by a just punishment. A few days after He struck the offender for a year and more with blindness from cataract, so that the eyes which had looked on unlawful things should not for a time be able to see even that which was lawful. And indeed not the slightest evil could penetrate his eyelids. Those about him knew of the blindness and they concealed it from the peering eyes of strangers with the greatest care. But he, humiliating himself under the chastising hand of the Lord, as though prepared for His scourges, was silent. He neither refused bodily medicines, nor eagerly sought them, but waited patiently for the time and the manner in which his Lord might see fit to remove the scourge, and no longer desire to strike him. For he knew that every son is chastised. [Heb. xii, 6.] The judger of hearts indeed purges even the smallest stains in His elect in this life, lest afterwards there should remain in them anything which might offend His eyes. And for this reason God brought on this affliction, that the youth's mind might be cleansed from that which was past, and be kept more pure in the future. When, therefore, God had fulfilled His will in him, He removed the affliction and restored the sight to his eyes.

11

WITH his senses as it were dried up by suffering, Gerald led an upright life, and departed neither to one side nor the other from the middle path of discretion, so that he neither failed in the duties of his worldly affairs, nor diverted himself from the practice of religion by earthly occupations. He surrounded himself with the better type of men and with clerics of good name, with whom whether at home or abroad he performed the divine Office either in common or privately.[1] On a certain Sunday he had to attend a

[1] What we are told about Gerald's devotions in this chapter is of great interest. It is valuable testimony to the practices of the pious layman of the time,



meeting of the law-court which had been arranged and to which certain nobles were going to come. Lest he should keep them waiting by coming late, he took care to go on horseback and set out before dawn. For he was on his guard on this grand court-day not to show himself slow or difficult to anybody, as is now the custom with some, who as though coming from a wedding give themselves to drunkenness before they show themselves to their friends—contrary to that saying of Scripture: *Woe to the land whose princes feast early in the morning* [Isa. v. 11]. But with Gerald it was not so. Very unworthy he thought it, that he who was the lord of many people should become a slave to the domination of vices. He went fasting to the law-court, lest failing in temperance he should be unable to give a reasonable judgement. For he sought what was of Christ, what was of peace, what might further the common good. After the night Office, if he was to go anywhere, the solemnity of Mass followed, and so, committing himself and his followers to the divine mercy he set out. On the above-mentioned Sunday, since it was necessary to start before dawn, he omitted the Mass, hoping to hear one after the court, but it was nowhere possible. He went away therefore very sad looking for a place where there might be some hope of finding a Mass, but when he could not find one, he called the clerics who happened to be present and with them all the soldiers who would sing psalms,[1] saying, "It is my fault that this holy day passes uselessly for us. But there is something which we may do for the praise of God, lest we should seem to have spent the holy day quite in vain." After saying this he went through the psalter from the beginning with them, singing no mortal song. And he made it now his custom to recite the psalter almost daily. And when he had finished it, he was seen to rejoice as though spiritually refreshed, as a man is accustomed to rejoice when he has fulfilled his ambition.

about which we know very little, and it illustrates perfectly Mr. Southern's remark that "what is quite clear is that those who set themselves a higher standard than the ordinary looked to the monasteries for their examples." (*The Making of the Middle Ages*, p. 158.) As he goes on to point out, when a layman's prayer-book appeared in the form of the Book of Hours in the fourteenth century, it contained simply the additions to the monastic office which had been introduced between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

[1] *Psalmistanos milites.*

12

IT seems to be useful to say something of his bodily appearance. For although the flesh "profiteth nothing" [John vi. 64], although beauty is a deceiving grace, because it is often the cause of lust and pride, nevertheless in this man it is to be praised, because it was both attractive and free from the foulness of lust. Gerald, therefore, was of medium height and well-proportioned. And while beauty encompassed all his members, his neck was of such shining white and so adorned to suit the eye, that you would think you had hardly seen another so beautiful. His beauty of mind further adorned the beauty of his body, so that the nature of his disposition shone forth in his appearance. And Scripture gives testimony of this, saying that the laughter of the teeth and the movement of the face show the inner nature of the man. [Ecclus. xix. 27.] For he had tasted that the Lord is sweet [Ps. xxxiii. 9] and how delightful is the embrace of the heavenly Spouse; and for that reason he did not suffer the beautiful image of his soul to be allured by the delectation of the flesh before the eyes of this same Spouse. His vassals delighted to kiss his neck, nor did he object, because pride, which is always intractable, found no place in him. His bodily agility made him very quick in his movements, and he was very strong. What is especially noteworthy, because it shows how admirable he was, is that, having matter for pride, he kept himself humble. How blameworthy are those on the other hand, who, possessing little or nothing, are yet puffed up with pride. After he applied himself more closely to intellectual studies his bodily activity began to fail. It was then that he began to take especial pleasure in conversation, and to give profound advice for the handling and arranging of affairs, and although he avoided words of buffoonery his serious talk was of such a nature that even in that he was pleasing to his hearers. He was neither unduly menacing in his threats, nor tenacious in nursing injuries. But neither was he too easy in conferring benefits, nor changeable in taking away those that he had given. Whatever he said he would do he carried out unhesitatingly, unless by chance he learnt that there was sin in it.



13

HE attached such importance to sobriety, that he preserved not only himself but also his household from drunkenness.[1] For those of his household were neither great eaters nor great drinkers. He never compelled his guests to drink, nor was drink brought to him more frequently than to his household. He so ordered his meals that the company rose from them without having drunk too much but at the same time suitably refreshed. And when sometimes he had made his guests, to whose welfare he gave himself entirely, dine early, he himself did not take anything before the third hour, and on fast days not before the ninth. This happy prince observed the precept of Scripture by eating in due time for his refreshment and not for pleasure. [Prov. xiii. 25.] For what might he guard against more fittingly than drunkenness, which apart from the fact that it is the death of the soul and, by the testimony of the Apostle, excludes, like homicide, from the kingdom of God [1 Cor. vi. 10], also does much harm to the body. For from this come lack of strength, shaking of the limbs, lack of perception in the senses, premature old age. Sight, speech, appearance are all debauched, and the beauty of religion quite disfigured. No one can be filled at once with wine and the Holy Spirit, and by no treaty can Jerusalem be saved from the fire of fornication, if she is not willing to keep Nabuzardan, the prince of cooks, from besieging her.[2]

14

CHAIRS for the poor were always placed in his presence and at intervals meals were put in front of them, that he might see for himself what and how much food was given to them.[3] Nor was he

[1] What we are told about Gerald in this chapter needs to be seen against the social background of the times. The feudal lords of this period seem to have been almost without exception utterly lacking in any sort of refinement. Gerald introduced some, and from religious motives.

[2] This is the same text (from 4 Kings xxv) which John quotes Odo as using in his preaching. See p. 20, *n.* 1.

[3] Much of Gerald's behaviour as related in this *Life* must to a contemporary reader have appeared most unusual and impressive, while to us, who are the heirs of the civilization he helped to form, it seems only what we should expect. On the other hand his free distribution of alms, as described in this chapter,

limited to receiving a certain number, but when more happened to be present, at least of those who seemed deserving, more were brought in to him. No one was ever turned away from his door without alms being given. His servants so arranged that he always had dishes at hand which he might give. Drink also was brought, which he distributed after inspecting and tasting it, so that those might first drink to whom he gave a portion of his bread. Believing that he received Christ in the poor, and reverencing Him in them, he brought to himself in their persons Him whose delight it is, according to the word of the prophet, to bring refreshment to the weary. [Isa. xxviii. 12.] How much those who send out their alms but do not bring the poor in to themselves diminish the merit they receive! For in this way they seem to exclude from their houses Christ, who says: *I was a stranger and you took me in.* [Matt. xxv. 35.] That he might surpass the justice of the Pharisees as the Lord commanded [Matt. v. 20], he had a ninth part of the produce of his fields set apart, and from this the poor were fed in certain of his houses, and clothes and shoes were provided for them in these places. To those who met him he gave coins which he carried for this purpose, and which he gave secretly either himself or through a reliable servant; sometimes when money was bequeathed for some man, he received it along with the needy, rejoicing and choosing to be joined to the poor; he distributed it at once and compensated those who had given by a generous performance of the divine Office in return for the small gift.

would have appeared much less surprising to a contemporary than it does to us. What we should call poor relief was given in no other way, and though no doubt it was the Church, through bishops, priests, and monasteries, which did most in this direction, the lay lords were accustomed to distribute alms freely, though it may have been as much from ostentation and at the same time a desire to acquire a sort of spiritual insurance, as from humanity. Where Gerald must have been exceptional was, as Odo points out, in the personal interest he took in the distribution of his alms. Class distinctions—comparable to the caste system as it existed in India—were immensely strong, and the typical feudal count would have felt the most profound contempt for the poor men he helped. (See Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, vol. ii, 2, p. 18.).



## 15

At meal times great respect was paid to him. Chattering or buffoonery had no place at his table but the talk was of necessary or virtuous subjects, or indeed of religious ones. At all times of the year he dined once in the day, unless perhaps in the summer when he supped off something simple and uncooked. At his table there was always reading for some time to begin with; but for the sake of the seculars present he used to suspend the reading at intervals, and ask the clerics what had been said in it—those whom he knew to be able to reply. He had noble clerics at his board to whom he eagerly imparted both good behaviour and learning. To the adolescent he showed himself more austere, saying that that age was very dangerous, when a youth put off the voice and appearance of his mother and began to assume the voice and appearance of his father; and one who took care to guard himself at that time, he said, might easily overcome thenceforth the movements of the flesh. When those whom he asked about the reading requested that he should rather speak himself, he used to offer them not a pompous dissertation, but a speech of learning and simplicity. When those were present who would bring forward something facetious or jocular, as used to happen, he restrained them not with biting indignation, but as though by joking also. But he never allowed idle talk to be protracted in his presence. For he knew that it is commanded to all Christians in general that each should eat his bread in silence. [2 Thess. iii. 12.] At the end of the meal the reader always repeated what had been read. So Gerald spent the greater part of meal times speaking with God, or with God speaking to him through the reading. Let them look to this example of his who, against the reproof of the Prophet, have the harp and the lyre to play at their banquets [Isa. v. 12]. They rejoice in the playing and exult at the voice of the organ. They look not at the work of the Lord, because among the voices of those who make a great noise they do not hear the cry of the poor. What then? That is true which Christ, who is the truth, said, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* [Matt. xii. 34.] It is clear

what those who are always speaking of worldly things, and little or rarely of God, love most, and what abounds in their hearts. Would that, like Gerald, they might look to the last things, and whether they ate or drank they might do all things to the praise of God according to the precept of the Apostle. [1 Cor. x. 31.] On three days in the week and during the whole time when abstinence is ordered, he abstained from meat. But if one of the annual feasts occurred in these days he so broke the abstinence that he abstained on some free ferial day in place of that which he had broken. And he used then to give a meal to one poor man over and above the usual number in view of the feast. But if a fast occurred on a Sunday, he by no means broke or neglected it on this account, but he kept the fast on the Saturday preceding. And if this should seem incongruous in the holy man, let him who may think so know that to the clean all things are clean [Tit. i. 15], that is, to those who eat without the vice of greed. The Judger of Hearts does not look to the quality of the food, but to the necessity or the appetite with which it is taken. The prophet Elias, and Esau,[1] show this by their example. It was lawful, therefore, for a layman, and especially one so just, to make use of things, which are not lawful to those whose profession forbids them. For the Tree of Paradise did not bring death because it was evil, but because it was presumptuously eaten against God's command.

## 16

He always wore woollen or linen clothes of the old fashion, and not in that which the sons of Belial, who are without restraint, have devised and follow in our day.[2] His were so made that they neither suggested pompous affectation, nor drew attention by plebeian rusticity. He took care not to adorn himself more than usual with silken or precious garments either because of the occurrence of any

[1] Presumably the idea is that Elias was justified in eating the bread and flesh brought to him by the ravens (3 Kings xvii. 6) both because of its provenance and his dispositions, while Esau is condemned for eating the pottage (good in itself) for which he sold his birthright (Gen. xxv. 30-34).

[2] Odo felt strongly about the fashions of dress in his day, but particularly, and not surprisingly, at their adoption by monks. Cf. John of Salerno's *Life*, bk. iii, 1, and *Collations*, bk. ii, 7.



feast or the presence of any dignitary, and he would not change or renew his sword-belt for twenty years if it would last so long. What shall I say of the belts, the twisted cinctures, the buckles, the decorated medallions for horses, when he not only forbade himself to wear gold, but even to possess it? For it was not in gold nor in the multitude of riches that he believed his strength to lie, but in God. Even those who profess religion, harassed by an unashamed and untiring care for the body after which they strive with every effort, scheme to obtain from those who see them the respect which they have lost by their morals through the display at least of a fine coat. It would be more use to these people to spend their time in the cultivation of the soul, which can equally grow more beautiful.

## 17

The poor and the wronged always had free access to him, nor did they need to bring the slightest gift to recommend their cause. For the more fully anyone brought his necessity to his notice, the more closely did he attend to his need. And now his goodness was heard of not only in neighbouring, but also in distant regions. And because everyone knew his kindness to all, many found the solution of their difficulties in him. Nor did he disdain either personally or through his officials to interest himself in the affairs of the poor, and, as occasion offered, to give help. For often when he knew that there was fierce strife between litigants, on the day on which the cause was to be heard he had Mass said for them, and implored the divine assistance for those whom, humanly speaking, he could not help. Nor did he allow any lord to take benefices from a vassal because he was angry with him.[1] But when the case was brought forward, partly by entreaty, partly by command, he allayed the exasperation. You might think the vigour of his justice severe in this one thing alone, that whenever a poor man was brought before a more powerful man, he was at hand to uphold the weaker, in

[1] The origin of the feudal benefice was that a man made over his freehold property to a lord in return for his protection. He then held the property as a benefice and became the vassal of the lord. There were strict obligations on both sides, but a domineering overlord might of course repudiate his obligations or even withdraw the benefice altogether. He had no right to do this if the vassal fulfilled his obligations.

such a way that the stronger was overcome without being hurt.[1] For the rest, truly hungering after justice, he insisted on its being carried out not only among his own people but even among strangers.

## 18

THE thirst for justice burned in him, and hunger too. Neither simplicity nor kindness was lacking to the asperity of his zeal, but neither was the asperity of zeal lacking to the kindness of his simplicity. For as it is said of Job that he was a man simple and upright [Job i. 1], so Gerald, although he had much care for the poor, was never slow in punishing the guilty. He was aware that it was divinely granted to some that they should wash away crime, which cannot remain unpunished, by temporal suffering. So King David, when he was dying, ordered Joab and Semei to be punished [3 Kings ii. 5 and 8].

Robbers had taken possession of a certain wood, and plundered and murdered both passers-by and those who lived in the vicinity. Gerald, hearing of this, immediately gave orders for them to be captured. It happened, however, that a certain countryman was driven by fear to join them. But the soldiers who captured them, fearing that Gerald would either release them, or blame them for showing him the prisoners unpunished, forthwith put out the eyes of all of them. And so it came about that this countryman was blinded. Later he went into the district of Toulouse, and a long time afterwards, when Gerald heard that he had not been a companion of the robbers, he was very grieved, and asked if he was still alive, and where he had gone. Having learnt that he had gone to the province of Toulouse, he sent him, so they say, a hundred shillings, ordering the messenger to ask pardon for him from the man.

## 19

How he mercifully consoled the afflicted, and often spared the guilty, may be seen from an example. His neighbours had afflicted

[1] We may very easily underrate the significance of Gerald's consideration for the poor. All the history of the times goes to show that it was very exceptional.



a certain priest with increasing quarrels, to the point that they put out his eyes. The count consoled the man greatly by his words, urging him to be patient. But lest the consolation of words should seem meagre, he handed over to him a certain church in his jurisdiction by formal deed.[1] After a little time one of those who had done violence to the priest was taken by the officers[2] and shut up in prison, and this was forthwith announced to the count as something over which he would rejoice. And he in haste, as though with the desire of punishing the man, went to the prison. But other cases arose which it was necessary to deal with on the next day, and so he ordered the accused to be kept till then. In the evening when the officers had gone home, he secretly ordered the jailer to refresh the man with food and drink. And because he had no shoes he allowed shoes to be given to him and permitted him to escape.[3] On the next day when those who were attending the court came to the count, he ordered the accused to be brought forth, and some men whom the jailer had prepared to act on his behalf announced trembling that the accused had escaped. Gerald, wishing to conceal the truth, made as though to threaten the jailer, but soon he said, "It is well, for the priest has now forgiven the injury done to him."

## 20

So, two men in chains were presented to him accused of a great crime. The accusers insisted that he should order them forthwith to be hanged. He dissembled, because he did not wish to free them

[1] Small churches, like monasteries, were of course the property of those who built them or on whose land they stood.

[2] These were presumably the officials of the count referred to in ch. 17.

[3] This apparently very arbitrary behaviour of Gerald's can be better understood, if it is remembered that the population of the whole country must have been very small by modern standards, and a local count would be likely to have knowledge of the people with whom he was dealing. Gerald must have known both the man and his accusers, and have had no doubts about the merits of the case. Such examples make it clear that the justice administered by the counts was of a patriarchal character little trammelled by legal forms. No doubt it was mainly in the interests of the count to see that some sort of justice was done, but he could as easily act in an arbitrary way, with cruelty and violence, as Gerald did with clemency. Theoretically the free man had a right of appeal to the king's court, but it is doubtful if this meant much around the year 900 in Aquitaine. Another example of the same sort of procedure occurs in the next chapter.

openly. For he so conducted himself in any good work, that the goodness did not appear too much. Looking therefore at the accusers, "If", he said, "they ought to die, as you say, let us first give them a meal in the customary manner." Then he ordered food and drink to be brought to them, and ordered them to be unbound so that they might eat. When they had eaten he gave them his knife saying, "Go yourselves and bring the osier with which you must be hanged." Not far away was a wood which grew up thickly with saplings. Going into this as though looking for osiers and gradually penetrating further they suddenly disappeared, and so escaped the moment of death. Those who were present, understanding that it was with his consent, did not dare to search for them among the bushes. He punished either with fines or branding the accused who were, as far as could be judged from their appearance, confirmed in evil. But those who had done wrong not through seasoned malice but inadvertently, he set free uncondemned. It was unheard of, nevertheless, that anyone was punished by death or maiming in his presence.

## 21

Of the many things he did let me recall a few particular examples which will suffice to show certain acts of goodness which are known to me. For this reason, too, I insert certain small facts through which his great zeal may be illustrated, as for example the following. Once while he was going along by the road,[1] a countrywoman was guiding the plough in an adjoining field. He asked her why she was doing a man's work. She replied that her husband had been long ill, that the time of sowing was passing, she was alone and had no one to help her. Having pity on her calamities, he ordered as many coins to be given her as there were days of sowing left over, so that on each day she might hire a labourer and she herself cease from doing the work of a man. Nature flees from

[1] *Agger publicus*. It was the Roman term for a built-up road. Dalton notes its use still in the sixth century (*The History of the Franks*, (trans.), Oxford, 1926, vol. i, p. 151)—less surprising than in the tenth. It very likely refers here to a Roman road.



everything artificial, as Ambrose says,[1] and its author, God, abhors what is unnatural. This is a small thing in itself, but the attitude of a just man in agreement with the laws of nature makes it become great.

## 22

On another occasion as he was going along the road a peasant was reaping chick-peas[2] nearby. Some of his retinue, who were in front, took some of it and began to eat it. When he saw this, spurring his horse, he came at full speed to the man, asking if his followers had taken the chick-pea. "I gave it to them freely," he said. "May God reward you!" Gerald replied.

## 23

An incident of the same kind is that which occurred when his servants were preparing a meal under the shade of some cherry trees. He bought for silver from a peasant who was claiming them some branches which were hanging down loaded with ripe fruit, which the servants had broken off before he came. Perhaps someone will say that these things are not worth relating: but I am showing the mind of this God-fearing man in small things, that indirectly it may be understood that he who did not despise little things, was not able to be brought low by great ones. Was not the goodwill of the widow with two small coins approved by the Lord? [Mark xii. 43.]

## 24

To his vassals he was so kind and peaceable that it was a matter of wonder to those who saw it. And they frequently complained that he was soft and timid, because he permitted himself to be injured by persons of low degree as though he had no authority. Nor was

[1] This may have been suggested by a rather vague recollection of *De Officiis Ministrorum*, lib. i, cap. xviii, 75: *Nihil enim fucatum placet. Motum natura informet. Fucatum* is the word Odo uses.

[2] The Latin is *cicer*, still the botanical name for a leguminous plant from which the poor made a kind of pulse or porridge.

he easily or lightly annoyed, as lords generally are, by his critics. On one occasion he met a number of countrymen who had left their holdings,[1] and were moving into another province. When he had recognized them and inquired where they were going with their household goods, they replied that they had been wronged by him when he had given them their holdings. The soldiers who were accompanying him urged that he should order them to be beaten and made to go back to the holdings from which they had come. But he was unwilling, for he knew that both he and they had one Lord in heaven, who was accustomed rather, in the words of the Apostle, to forbear threats [Eph. vi. 9], and who was not used to raise the hand of His might against the fatherless [Job xxxi. 21]. He therefore permitted them to go where they thought they would be better off, and gave them permission to live there. Not without shame I recently heard some idle tattle that he used not to remit the debts of a man who was in pledge to him, but that is quite false, as those bear witness who often saw him remit not only the interest but also the capital.[2]

## 25

His tenants and clerics, who loved him dearly as a father, often brought him bundles of wax, which he with many thanks accepted as great gifts. And he did not allow any of this wax to be burnt for his own use, but he ordered it all to be burnt in lights before the altar or the relics of the saints, which he had carried about with him. The servants of his bedchamber, when it happened that there was no wax ready for his service, prepared birch bark or pinewood torches. But how could one who was so careful that private people should not use the gifts which had been freely given him, exact strict payment from those who had pledged themselves? Rather,

[1] *Colonia* is the word used. The *coloni* were theoretically free and were *ingenui*, persons before the law, but they were in effect only the highest grade of serfs, for they were bound to their holdings, as we see here. These, presumably, were men whom Gerald had recently settled for some reason on part of his estates. See *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. ii, p. 150, and Dalton, vol. i, p. 391.

[2] A man who owed Gerald money gave him some piece of property as a pledge of surety, and this was regarded as cancelling the debt. Gerald is accused of accepting the pledge and also demanding payment of the debt.



he often remitted to the debtors more than they owed to him by right. In the same way he forbore to threaten his servants, according to the precept of the Apostle [Eph. vi. 9]. Sometimes he was defrauded, and according to the saying of the same Apostle [1 Cor. vi. 7], he suffered his goods to be seized.

## 26

To prove this by an example: a thief once entered his tent at night; a candle was burning before his bed as was usual and Gerald happened to be awake, for it was his custom in bed to be nourished with the love and the sweetness of Christ through the practice of prayer. Curiously peering about, the thief was looking to see if there was anything that he could carry away. He saw a little cushion with a silk cover and stretching out his hand drew it to him. "Who are you?", said Gerald. The thief was terrified and hesitated in a dazed way. Then Gerald said, "Go on with what you are doing, and depart carefully lest anyone hear." So he persuaded him that he might lawfully depart with what he had stolen. Who except Gerald would have done this? Certainly it seems to me that this is much more worthy of admiration than if he had caused the man to grow stiff in a stone prison.

## 27

How careful he was to fulfil that command of the Apostle: *You shall not circumvent your brother in business* [1 Thess. iv. 6] will be clear from this example. Once on his way back from Rome as he was going past Pavia he made his camp not far from the city. The Venetians[1] and many others hearing of this immediately went out to him, for he was quite the most celebrated traveller on that road, and was known to all as a religious and generous man. When therefore the traders, as their manner is, were going about among the tents and enquiring if anybody wanted to buy anything, some of

[1] Venice was already the clearing-house for trade with Byzantium and the East. Charles the Great conceded this trade in north Italy to the Venetians in 812, and Otto I renewed the concession in 967. This chapter, with its direct reference to Constantinople, provides evidence for its operation between these two dates. See Ganshof, *Mélanges offerts à N. Iorga*, Paris, 1933, pp. 295-307.

the more considerable among them came to Gerald's tent and asked the retainers whether the lord count (for so they all called him) would order some cloaks or spices. He himself called them and said, "I bought what I wanted in Rome; but I should like you to tell me whether I bought wisely." Then he ordered the cloaks that he had got to be brought out. Now, one of them was very valuable, and a Venetian looking at it, asked what he had given for it. When he had learnt the price, "Indeed," he said, "if it was at Constantinople it would be worth even more." When the count heard this he was horrified, as though in dread of a great crime. Afterwards, therefore, when he met some Roman pilgrims whom he knew, he gave them as many shillings as the Venetian had said the cloak was worth more than the price he had given for it, telling them where they could find the seller of the cloak. Truly, while men are accustomed to have compunction for other kinds of sin, and to consider amendment, rarely or never will you see anyone except Gerald who regrets having transgressed in a sin of this kind. But indeed he knew that God is offended by all sin, and he did not wish to offend even in the smallest things Him whom he loved with his whole heart.

## 28

NOT unmindful that the justice of Christians ought to surpass the justice of the Pharisees [Matt. v. 20], when all his produce had been rightly tithed, he ordered a ninth part to be set aside so that it might be used to buy various necessaries for the poor, and from this, as occasion demanded, clothes also were bought for the needy who presented themselves from time to time. In addition he always carried money with him, of which he secretly gave as much as he could to poor people whom he met, either himself or through somebody who knew of the case. And though the returns from his fields and vineyards were large, it was never heard that his stewards lent anything.[1] He himself never bought land, except one small field which happened to be surrounded by one of his properties. Some rich men become very ardent over this, forgetting the

[1] This is presumably regarded as proof of Gerald's control.



terrible threat of the prophet: *Woe to you that join house to house and lay field to field* [Isa. v. 8]. For Gerald, according to the precept of the Gospel, was contented with his wages. [Luke iii. 14.] And as he never injured or calumniated anyone, so, like the Lord, the Disposer of all things, he kept those things which were his by right safe from the wicked and perverse. For he was lord of so many estates in different provinces, that in those places in which he had full authority he might truly be said to be rich. Nor did the number of his properties make him proud, for as the psalmist says, there was nothing on the earth that he wished from the Lord. [Ps. lxxii. 25.] And the Lord indeed added all these things to him, because he sought first the kingdom of God [Matt. vi. 33]. By the grace of God he so prospered, and went on his way so safely and unharmed, that the saying of Job would seem to apply to him: *Thou hast made a fence for him, and his possession has increased on the earth.* [Job i. 10.]

## 29

LET me relate this fact as an example of how he used to overcome evil by good, according to the precept of the Apostle. [Rom. xii. 21.] When he came on one occasion to Piacenza, a certain cleric arrived who was in charge of the port.[1] As is usual there, this man was expecting very lucrative passage-money from the Roman pilgrims. For some reason he was in a very bad temper, and was flinging angry words about, attacking the Bishop of Rodez[2] and other distinguished men in opprobrious terms. The man of God happened to be standing opposite him, and, fearing a quarrel would start, restrained his fellow-travellers from using hard words in reply. But the cleric he subdued by gentle words, and gave him

[1] The word is *portus*, which was used for the regular stopping-places for traffic on the rivers (Boissonade, *Life and Work in Medieval Europe*, trans. Power, London, 1927, p. 110). Piacenza is close to the river Po. The official in charge of such a stopping-place might well be a cleric in minor orders. Odo calls him simply *clericus*.

[2] Rodez is about fifty miles south of Aurillac, which lay just outside the diocese. The first bishop, St. Amantius, is said to have been a disciple of St. Martial. The thirteenth bishop of the see (c. 900-9) was called Gausbert and is evidently the man referred to by that name as a close friend of Gerald's in ii, 2. It was no doubt Gausbert who was with him on this occasion. See *Gallia Christiana*, ed. Sainte-Marthe, Paris, 1720, vol. i, pp. 195 ff.

some small gifts. Noticing the graceful words with which Gerald restrained the bishop and the others from replying to his insults, the cleric returned to a more gentle frame of mind, and asked who he was. When Gerald replied that he was from Aquitaine and a person of moderate position, the cleric noting his appearance and his speech, gave way entirely to his graciousness. He remitted whatever was owed of passage-money for all his company, and filled his flasks and bottles and those of all his party with wine. For the count had this gift from God, that both he and what he said were most pleasing, and not only to chance persons, but to great men. Even by kings he was always liked and respected.

## 30

AND rightly indeed was he loved by all, for he himself loved everybody. Let me relate what he did for a certain fugitive as for a friend. On this same journey he found a man who had left his protection some years before.[1] This man was considered to be rich and of some standing by the people among whom he dwelt. Gerald's retainers finding the man brought him trembling and in great fear into his presence. But Gerald privately inquired of him how things were going with him, and when he had learnt that he was held in no small esteem in that place, he replied, "And neither will I bring you into discredit." He ordered his men not to betray what the man had been in his own country, and then in the presence of his neighbours he gave him some little gifts and paid him considerable respect in talking to him and at table, and sent him away in peace. Who but Gerald would have done this? Yet this is what he did who was no servant of avarice, but had dedicated himself entirely to mercy.

## 31

AGAIN on this same journey, a certain man from the neighbourhood of Bourges[2] had broken his hip not far from Rome. Abandoned by his companions, he remained alone with his wife. One of Gerald's soldiers, a certain Boniface, found him by chance, and

[1] The man was evidently a serf.
[2] The town lies some 160 miles due north of Aurillac.



hearing of his necessity brought him to Gerald saying: "Look, my lord, I have found something after your heart's desire which I present for your pleasure: here is a man needing help." The man of God joyfully took him into his protection and supplying all his wants conducted him to Brioude.[1] Then he gave him ten shillings more with which he might get back to his own people. This and similar facts witness to the desire of showing mercy with which he was generously filled by divine inspiration.

## 32

WE know indeed that the corn for the harvest must grow along with the cockle [Matt. xiii. 30] and the grain of wheat be kept down by the straw above it for a time; so it was necessary that the malicious Cain should exercise the just Abel in patience. Gerald also, who like Job may be said to have been the brother of dragons and the companion of ostriches [Job xxx. 29], was often attacked by certain men of his provinces. For, the state being in a most disturbed condition,[2] the marquises in their insolence had subjected the royal vassals to themselves.[3] But it had been proved by

[1] In the Auvergne uplands some forty miles south of Clermont-Ferrand. It was more or less on Gerald's way home, though north of the direct route, but it was still some 130 miles from Bourges. I make no attempt to assess the value of the *solidus*, which I have translated "shilling".

[2] Odo gives us no indication of date, but it is almost certain that the period to which he is referring was the reign of King Odo of France. The Emperor Charles the Fat, who was the last of his line to rule over the whole of the Empire of Charles the Great, died in 887. For three years before he died the Vikings had been making particularly heavy raids into France and had almost succeeded in capturing Paris. The only Carolingian of the direct line, the future Charles the Simple, was a boy of eight, but it was out of the question for a child to rule at that time, and Odo, the Count of Paris, who had saved his city, though abandoned by the Emperor, was elected king. Many of the great lords, who regarded him as one of themselves, were never really loyal to him, and in 893 some of them sent for the boy Charles from England. There followed six years of civil war (893-9) before Odo died. We have no indication of the part played by Gerald in this, and we do not even know to which king, Odo or Charles the Simple, he gave his allegiance, but it seems most likely to have been Charles, for his friend William of Aquitaine was certainly hostile to Odo. William's support of Charles would not necessarily have prevented him from trying to withdraw Gerald's immediate allegiance from that king. (See next note).

[3] This is the process known as mediatizing. There were a number of men who held estates in various parts of the kingdom as benefices direct from the king himself. The local magnates, given the circumstances of the time, naturally preferred these men to be directly subject to themselves, and in the end they did in fact succeed in mediatizing nearly all the royal vassals.

We have an interesting example of the thing actually happening a little lower

experience in many cases that, as has been said, the Almighty opposed the enemies of Gerald. He appeared so invincible to them that the trouble which they strove to make for him came back rather on their own heads, as it is written: *He that diggeth a pit for his neighbour shall fall into it* [Prov. xxvi. 27]. Duke William of Aquitaine indeed, a good man and praiseworthy for many things, when he had already become very powerful, urged Gerald not by threats but by entreaties to leave the king's service and *commend* himself to him. But Gerald would not agree since he had only recently assumed the title of Count.[1] He commended his nephew, Rainald, to him, however, with a great number of his men. But the same William was not at all annoyed with him, remembering that his father Bernard had recommended[2] him as a youth to this same Lord Gerald for the love he bore him. And therefore he always held him in great veneration and as a dear companion. When the matter came up William went to talk with him, and, always delighted by the gentleness of this gracious man, by force of entreaties exacted that he should remain with him for some time. And in discussing what was to be done he often made him walk for a long time with him.

## 33

IT happened once, since the occasion demanded it, that he spent a long time with William in a district to which he had gone to wage

down in the text. Gerald was evidently a royal vassal, and we are told explicitly that William of Aquitaine tried hard to make him leave the king's service and become his own vassal. Gerald refused, but the course he followed was really a compromise. He commended his nephew, who was also his heir, to William, and in this way, although he maintained his personal allegiance to the king, the eventual mediatization of his estates would be brought about. Thus Ganshof (*Feudalism*, trans. P. Grierson, London, 1952, p. 55) where this passage is referred to and parts of the text quoted, but it is not clear how far Gerald did make Rainald his heir. See p. 136, *n.* 2.

[1] It is difficult to know just what this means and what Gerald's title to be called Count really was, for it appears that there was no Count of Aurillac before or after him. The phrase used in the text is *favore comitis nuper usurpato*. Odo seems to imply (i, 6) that Gerald exercised the functions of a count from when he succeeded to his estates, and it would seem that he did simply adopt the title.

[2] The Latin is *commendavit*, but I have translated it "recommended", in the general sense that we use the word today, for it is evidently not used in its technical feudal sense. William of Aquitaine could never have been a vassal of Gerald's.



war. During this time the pay, which was carried on Gerald's pack-horses, gradually gave out, and the army turned to looting. Under the pretext of pursuing William's enemies it laid waste the whole region, with the result that the inhabitants, fearing for their safety, left their property and fled, and no one could be found to pay Gerald's retainers. As they found nothing to buy, and they were not allowed to touch any of the booty, they suffered great want in that expedition. For he would not allow anything to be received from those who were plundering, lest by participating with them he should be party to sin. He stayed, however, in the company of his friend, and in spite of his troubles did not desert him. Some mocked, because he and his men were in want while others enjoyed the booty, but many, who were sensible, blessed him lamenting greatly that they were not fit to imitate such an example. From this he earned the name of Gerald the Good, by which he was afterwards always known.

## 34

WILLIAM thought so well of him that he wished to give him his sister in marriage, and their mother, Ermengard, desired it also without delay, for she loved this man with great affection. But Christ, the Son of the Virgin, had ever imbued him with the love of chastity, which he so embraced from his earliest years that he would not allow himself to be diverted from it even by the prospect of so excellent a marriage. The horror he felt for carnal obscenity may be judged from the fact that he never incurred a nocturnal illusion without grief. Whenever this human misfortune happened to him in sleep, a confidential servant brought him privately a change of clothes, kept ready for this emergency, and cloths and a vessel of water. When the servant had brought these, he immediately retired and shut the door, for Gerald would not allow him to see him naked. This follower of interior purity so fled from the staining of the body that he washed away what happened to him in sleep not only with water but with tears. This may seem foolish, but only to those whose unclean minds reek with the foulness of vice, and who, when they soil themselves naturally or voluntarily,

disdain to wash away their uncleanness. But Gerald knew the Scripture, *With all watchfulness keep thy heart* [Prov. iv. 23], and again, *He that condemneth small things shall fall by little and little.* [Ecclus. xix. 1.] Only consider how great this man is to be held who, placed amidst wordly riches and at the height of earthly position, preserved chastity. What could he have done more splendid? One could demand nothing more, or more excellent, for as St. Martin asserts, nothing is to be compared with virginity.

## 35

COUNT Ademarus[1] was very insistent that Gerald should give him his allegiance, but he was not able to extract any agreement from him. Gerald refused to commend himself not only to Ademarus but even to Duke William, who had greater possessions, and I believe he had in mind Mardochai who scorned to submit himself to the proud Aman and to show to princes an honour due to God (Esther iii. 2]. Indeed, when he was enjoying the friendship of William and apparently in peace, that persecution might not be lacking to one living in Christ, Satan stirred up the above-mentioned Count Ademarus against him whom he had tried to reach by many and various temptations, but whom he had never been able to subject to himself. On one occasion it happened that Gerald camped at night in a meadow with a few soldiers, and Ademarus, having sent a spy, ascertained where he was and how many he had with him. Delighted at having found an opportunity of capturing him, he collected a force of armed men, and directed it to the place. Gerald, it is said, was asleep with all his men in a part of the meadow. But He who guards Israel did not sleep in guarding an innocent man. As it is written of the prophet Jeremias that the Lord hid him on the way [Jer. xxxvi. 26], so God concealed Gerald, and the men, having made a circle round the whole

[1] According to Duchesne this was the Count of Poitiers of that name, while Bouange (i, pp. 457-63) thinks that it was one Ademarus de Scalis, so called from a castle of the same name which he possessed in the city of Tulle. The relations of these feudal lords with each other and with the kings, Odo and Charles the Simple, were so complicated at this time (888-98), and the evidence that we have concerning them is so fragmentary, that it is impossible to be sure who this man was, or of the reason for his hostility to Gerald.



meadow, and then a smaller one in the centre, were not able to find him. Ademarus, his effort having been foiled, and with regret that his wickedness was brought to nothing, departed. The just man, as it is written, with clean hands has become stronger to praise the Lord [Job xvii. 9].

## 36

IN the same way the followers of Count Ademarus occupied his castle.[1] When Gerald heard this he took a few soldiers who happened to be with him at the time, and hastened to the place. Ademarus, with a strong body of troops, prepared to follow the attackers. But when the troops which Gerald was leading were not far from the castle, Ademarus held back his hastening army, saying, "We must find out by how many fighting men this Gerald is defended, who has dared to come before us and lay siege to the castle, for he would not have put himself into this danger unless he had been guarded by forces from the countryside." He then sent some evil vassals to investigate. Night came on, and the spies hastened without delay and carefully sought out the nature of Gerald's encampment. But as happens at night, they mistook some white stones seen at a distance in the uncertain light for the tents of the besiegers. They forthwith returned, pale and trembling, to Ademarus and told him that they had seen an enormous encampment. On their way back they passed a certain married woman to whom they told the same thing, and it was through her that what had appeared to the spies was afterwards made known to the man of God. Ademarus, therefore, his army having been overthrown by the divine will, returned to his own part of the country, and when the invaders of the castle learnt next day that he was no longer present, they sought peace from Gerald, begging that he would permit them to retire without disgrace. And that the man of God, Gerald, immediately did. But his soldiers, who were greatly

[1] In this and the following chapters Odo uses *castellum*, *castrum*, and *oppidum* to describe what is evidently Gerald's castle at Aurillac. The castle at this time would be a primitive affair, probably of timber, standing on a mound surrounded by a palisade and moat. (See Lavisse, vol. ii, (2), p. 15.) In general all these stories give a good picture—and it is a contemporary one—of the lawlessness of the nobility of the time.

roused, would hardly suffer them to go unless they were despoiled of their arms. The goodness of Gerald, however, prevailed, and he compelled his men to stand aside while the fleeing enemy came out through a postern. Nevertheless he ordered two of his men to stand there armed, and see that no one dared to take any of their belongings as they went out. In this way Gerald triumphed without bloodshed over his discomfited enemy, and Christ, as His manner is, brought greater honour to His soldier through this adversity.

## 37

GODFRED, the Count of Turenne,[1] on one occasion collected a force of troops and hastened to provoke the man of God to war, and to lay waste the districts under him. But it happened that he was so wounded by the very sword with which he had armed himself, that he was not able to carry out the expedition he had undertaken. Understanding at length that he had been wounded on account of the wrong to the man of God, he gave up his malice, rightly seeing that the saying of Moses held good: *Let us flee from Israel: for the Lord fighteth for them against us.* [Exod. xiv. 25.]

## 38

NEVERTHELESS, the brother of the aforesaid Ademarus secretly broke into the castle which overlooks the monastery.[2] But because he had learnt from the experience of others that, with God on his side, Gerald always prevailed over his enemies, he did not dare to remain there. Nevertheless, he took everything that could be carried away, before fleeing as fast as he could. Not long afterwards he gave back everything to some honest men who were reproaching him for his crime, and coming to the man of God he asked pardon

[1] Nothing certain seems to be known about this man. Duchesne doubtfully identifies him with a Count of Turenne who was active some fifteen years before. He was a comparatively near neighbour of Gerald's, Turenne being some forty-five miles west of Aurillac. (Cf. p. 124, *n.* 1).

[2] The castle of Aurillac still stands on an eminence overlooking the town with the church of St. Gerald at its centre. This church is on the site of the one he put up himself (cf. p. 137, *n.* 1) and the monastery was beside it. Unsightly modern buildings have been added to the castle, and the whole is now used as a school.



for his boldness. For Gerald was held in such reverence by all who knew him that anyone who injured him, as though he had committed a sacrilege, might be assured that he would not prosper. Although the sons of darkness molested the son of light in the ways which I have related and in many others, he did not fail to protect the poor wherever he was able. He pardoned those who injured him so easily that you would think that he was more willing to pardon than they were to be reconciled. The harder case for him was always one involving the poor, since he had much sympathy for them, and he could more easily neglect his own interest than theirs. Like a skilful doctor who chances to be wounded himself but is careful to heal the wounds of others, he did not fail to protect the weak even when he was suffering injury himself.

## 39

HE was so invincible to his enemies that the harm which they tried to inflict on him came back rather on their own heads, as may be seen from what has been said above and from the following example. Count Adalelmus, the brother of Ademarus, apart from the injury which he did to Gerald when he attacked the castle of Aurillac (which injury Gerald gladly forgave him), was still inflamed with malice and was persistently driven to harm the holy man.[1] Having collected, therefore, a force of his followers he tried to break into the castle at a time when Gerald happened to be hearing Mass. When he was still some distance off, those inside saw him coming and quickly shut the gate. A great noise of people shouting arose in the castle and the soldiers who were at Mass with the count wanted to go out, but he stopped them with a word and would not allow them to go until Mass was finished. Meanwhile the followers of Adalelmus, going round the castle walls, found nothing except seven horses, which they drove off, and seeing they

[1] This sentence presumably refers to the attack on Aurillac described in the last chapter. We are told there that Adalelmus—presuming that there is only one brother of Ademarus in question—repented of his hostility to Gerald, so we must suppose the repentance was of short duration. These chapters illustrate Odo's insufficiency as an historian. He is only concerned with the incidents as examples of Gerald's edifying behaviour and not at all with relating them to the story of his life.

had made their attack to no purpose they began shamefacedly to retire. It is said that the man of God, after he had restrained his soldiers, took his psalter and straightway went up above the gate and recited I know not which of the psalms to the Lord. The tyrant who had made the heart of the just man to mourn [Ezech. xiii. 22] was nevertheless permitted to retire rejoicing. I am about to relate marvellous things and almost unbelievable, unless they had been asserted on such good testimony. Nearly sixty of their horses died in a short time, and Adalelmus after fourteen days died so terrible a death, that in whatever place he was buried a violent whirlwind uncovered his body. Adalbert bears witness to this, that same monk who preaches the word of God to the people at Limoges. He used to look after the treasury of St. Martial at Turenne,[1] when it had been moved there for fear of the pagan peoples. Seeing what had happened, the robbers sent back to the man of God the horses which they had taken.

## 40

SOMETIMES he was compelled unwillingly to show his strength and to bow the neck of the wicked by force of arms, as happened in the case of a most evil man called Arlaldus. This man held a certain small castle which is called St. Céré,[2] and coming out from this like a wolf in the evening he made attacks on the retainers of Gerald, who as a peaceable man talked to him who hated peace, and also gave him some little gifts, and arms for his soldiers, as though to soften his fierce manners by kindness. But the foolish and brutal man, attributing this not to goodness but to cowardice, acted still more audaciously against his retainers. At length Gerald, considering that he could not restrain the madness of the foolish man without punishing him, collected a force of soldiers and went

[1] This was no doubt the treasury of the church of St. Martial at Limoges, which had been moved to Turenne (some sixty miles south) to escape the invasions of the Norsemen. The relics of St. Martin, and doubtless other treasures along with them, had been removed in a similar way from Tours (cf. p. 84, *n.* 1). In the tenth century, with the settling of the Norsemen in Normandy, conditions improved and treasuries were able to be restored.

[2] A small town in the Department of Lot lying about twenty-seven miles west and a little south of Aurillac. The ruins of a castle stand on a hill above the town to this day.



to his castle. And by a remarkable stroke of victory, he drew the beast from his lair without killing any of his men. When Arlaldus stood before him full of confusion, Gerald, as befitted him, spoke not abusively but reasonably. Trembling he replied with humble and appealing words, and the man of God said to him: "Now you have learnt that you and your forces cannot resist me: be careful therefore how you rage, be careful how you continue to act with malice, lest something worse comes on your head. I will let you go without troubling to take a hostage or an oath from you. Nor will I permit any of your goods to be taken in compensation for the booty which you habitually take." So he sent the man away with a rebuke, and he henceforth was careful not to presume to injure Gerald's people.

## 41

Now, as I said above, his adversaries, dismayed by the fear of God, gave in, for although after the example of Job he was the brother of dragons and the companion of ostriches [Job xxx. 29], the beasts of the field were peaceable to him. He had a freehold property at Pousthomy,[1] and from there his estates so lay that in going and returning from the Puy de Griou[2] he was always able to stay at his own chapels.[3] Moreover he did not need to commend any village to another lord for its safety, except one small place called Talizat,[4] which was situated far from the rest of his property among bad neighbours. The officers permitted him,[5] though he was

[1] A township which lies about seventy-five miles south of Aurillac in the Department of L'Aveyron. It is about twenty-five miles east of Albi.

[2] *Ad montem magnum Greon.* This seems to be the Puy de Griou, one of the heights in the Monts du Cantal lying about sixteen miles north east of Aurillac The distance in a direct line from there to Pousthomy would be about ninety-five miles, which gives a good idea of the extent of Gerald's estates.

[3] The word *capella* used here presumably means some small oratory or country church on his estates.

[4] *Taladiciacus.* The little hamlet of Talizat lying some thirty-seven miles north-east of Aurillac. Odo's statement that it was isolated from Gerald's other property is borne out by the fact that all the other places named except the Puy de Griou lie south or west of Aurillac.

[5] It is difficult to know what this passage means. Odo says that the officials permitted him *invito et nolenti* to commend the property (that is, he held in future as a vassal of Bernard's). It is hard to see how they could have permitted him, or the transaction could have been made at all, if he did not know of it, and I have omitted the word *nolenti* in the translation. As he was a royal vassal, it is

unwilling, to commend this to a certain Bernard for safety. He bore this patiently with a certain amusement, saying: "It is well that I should learn that it is better to trust in the Lord than in man." [Ps. cxvii. 8.] It is good to relate this, so that it may be seen that whenever God permitted something to happen for his trial, he did not let it lead to sadness but to humility. This demonstrates that he lived by faith [Rom. i. 17], and knowing how to subject everything to the divine dispensation, was aware that nothing is done without reason, as it is written. [Job v. 6.]

## 42

I HAVE now treated of his external actions and his ordinary way of life, from which it may easily be seen, that he was a man who cultivated justice, and, according to the apostolic precept, lived soberly and piously and justly [Tit. ii. 12]. Since therefore he fulfilled uncomplainingly all that justified him in the eyes of the Lord it ought not to seem incredible that the Lord multiplied His mercies on him. For this reason I exhort those to whom all that report says of this holy man seems unworthy of credence to reconsider his case more cautiously and more diligently. For if it seems to be a difficulty, that he was a man of great position in the world, it is to be considered that that man is especially worthy of praise who has matter for pride and attains the height of power but is nevertheless humble. For power is only from God, who, according to the Scripture, does not cast away the mighty, whereas He himself also is mighty. [Job xxxvi. 5.] Although Gerald was raised on high by the glory of the world, it ought not to seem incredible that God should glorify the man who glorified Him in the observance of His commandments [1 Kings ii. 30]. Were not king David, Ezechias, and Josias mighty and warlike? The same things have been heard in this age of those who took care to glorify Him by keeping His commandments, and whom God honours

possible that the officials were those of the king, but the whole passage is obscure in detail. Bouange (p. i, 42) supposes that the officials were his own, and that they suggested the arrangement, to which he reluctantly agreed. The difficulty in the text as it stands is the word *permiserunt*, which is hardly compatible with Bouange's interpretation. It was evidently regarded as a humiliation for him that he should have to commend any property at all.



with miracles, as King Oswald of the English.[1] For in every age the divine mercy does many things to foster religion, which has been despised and forgotten. Whence the Apostle says that God leaves no age without a witness of Him [Acts xiv. 16], and this is sometimes given by the wicked, as under Moses they performed many signs, of whom it is written, that with most of them God was not well pleased [1 Cor. x. 5]. Faithful witnesses assert things which are hardly to be believed, as St. Jerome of a man who was formerly violent and a robber, that after he had been converted to Christ he made the sun to stand still so that he might complete his journey, and then entered in to his disciples in bodily form through a closed door. If therefore God, who did wonderful things for the Fathers, even in our time deigns to work miracles in order to revive enthusiasm for downtrodden religion through a man who, as in the days of Noe, was found just, it ought not to seem incredible. But He rather is to be glorified who, leaving no time without a witness of His goodness, and mindful of His promise, does not cease to do good to His people. Keeping for the next book what has to be said about the actions of this man after he had given himself entirely to the cult of the divine service, let me bring this one to an end in the name of the Lord.

[1] The story of St. Oswald, the King of Northumbria, who was slain fighting against the pagan Penda, is told by Bede (*Hist. Eccl.*, iii 1-3, 9-13).

# Book II

## *Preface*

Those who rashly dispute about Gerald's merits may satisfy themselves if they will consider the nature of his life. As if seated on a judgement-seat they may determine whether he ought to be a saint or not; for this depends upon the will of God, which brings it about that even by the reprobate marvels are often performed for the benefit of the good. Let them therefore be satisfied by the testimony of the miracles[1] which Christ deigned to work through him both in his lifetime and after his death. To those who find satisfaction in remarking that Gerald was both a man of great position and holy, I would point out (lest they congratulate themselves on this) that unless they become poor in spirit and, as he did, season their power with religion, their little house will not be able to stand. They will be condemned by a comparison with him, for they could have lived righteously as he did, but they would not. There are some professed religious, great eaters and drinkers, who making excuses for their own sins assert in their cups that Gerald used to eat meat and yet was holy, but their profession clearly condemns them. For many things are lawful to a layman which are not lawful to a monk. Adam was condemned, not because the tree in Paradise was evil in itself, but because he did that which had been forbidden. Gerald was quite justified in using those things which are allowed to his state in life, for he both abstained from what is not allowed and took his food with the poor. He knew that wine was made to be drunk soberly. Elias too ate meat and was worthy of being carried up into heaven. But through the greed which drives some men Esau lost his first birthright for a pottage of lentils. [Gen. xxv. 31-4.] Gerald's case therefore is different from these. But let

[1] In one sentence Odo seems to repudiate miracles as a witness to sanctity and in the next to appeal to them. In the first sentence he uses the word *signa*, in the second *miracula*, but the distinction could only be made presumably in the light of the character of the man who performed them, *signa* being performed by the reprobate and *miracula* by the holy.



those who say foolishly that he can neither be called a martyr nor a confessor know that he can be called both, and not only he but all those who carry the Cross by resisting vice, or who glorify God by doing good. God indeed is confessed by deeds, as John bears witness: *By this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments.* [1 John ii. 3.] By deeds also He is denied, as the Apostle says of some: *They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him* [Tit. i. 16]. Since therefore a confessor is so called because he confesses, and God is either denied or confessed by deeds, Gerald can all the more truly be called a confessor as he confessed God by more righteous deeds. What do those who, like the Jews, seek signs, do about John the Baptist, who is not reported to have worked any miracle after his nativity? With regard to this man, although miracles are by no means absent, I say one thing, that as he did not put his hope in money or riches, he performed, as it is written, wonderful things in his life. [Ecclus. xxxi. 9.]

### I

The athlete of the heavenly hosts long struggling in the arena of this earthly life fought manfully against the forces of evil. And indeed keeping the word of life in the midst of a wicked nation [Phil. ii. 15], he shone out as a lamp. And since it was necessary that he should be tested in the darkness of the storm, the malignant enemy tried by all the tricks in his power to put out this light both directly and through his ministers. But as a flame fanned by the wind burns more fiercely, so the fire of divine love, which glowed in the heart of Gerald from his youth, could not be extinguished by the rain of temptation. On the contrary, as he grew more mature, and any vices which he had were gradually suppressed, he daily grew stronger in virtues. Now he set his heart on rising upwards [Ps. lxxxiii. 6], now according to the saying of the Prophet he towered above the high places of the earth [Isa. lviii. 14]. You may see the dawn of his sanctity break on the festival day, you may see the lily spring up among the thorns [Cant. ii. 2], and that the nearer he came to maturity the more did the flowers of his virtue

unfold. And therefore as though resting on the highest point, he had fixed the desire of his mind on the happiness of heaven. And since through this desire of heaven an inward light illumined him, he was able to distinguish the darkness of earthly desire. Should I not have called earthly desire a darkness which blinds the lovers of the world, so that they love vanity? But Gerald had learnt to distinguish the precious from the valueless, and thought it very unworthy that he should lick the dust who knew himself to be called to the banquet of the heavenly Lamb. He grieved much over those whose love of the world makes them enemies of God. And after he had tasted how sweet the Lord is [Ps. xxxiii. 9], he disdained to drink of the stolen waters which are sweeter [Prov. ix. 17]. He lamented rather those who, according to the saying of Job, run eagerly to gnaw the roots of juniper [Job xxx. 4], that is, a cupidity full of thorns. He scorned worldly power, which was abundantly offered to him. But nevertheless, as it is the part of the wise to turn all things to their use, he took thought how he might so dispose of his temporal possessions that they might profit him in eternity.

## 2

He called, therefore, the venerable and most praiseworthy Bishop Gausbert,[1] with some other honest men, and told them privately what was in his mind. For this Gausbert was very dear to the man of God, and he and Gerald were intimate friends, united as they were by the common bonds of holiness. Gerald, therefore, stated that he was weary of the life he was leading, that he desired to enter religion, to go to Rome, and to make over his property by will to the blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles. When the matter had been discussed for a long time, the holy man Gausbert, considering the case more deeply, finally recommended that for the sake of the general welfare he should continue to wear secular dress, but that he should dedicate the property to the blessed Peter as he wished. And so as not to appear disobedient by adhering obstinately to his plan Gerald agreed. Mindful of that saying of

[1] He was the Bishop of Rodez. See p. 119, *n.* 2.



the Apostle that the Jew (which is interpreted *one who confesses*)[1] becomes greater and better in secret than in public,[2] he was tonsured in such a way that it remained hidden from men, though known to God. For he shaved off part of his beard, and continuing round his head shaved off part of his hair in the form of a tonsure. But in order that this should be quite unknown, he bound some of his chamberlains, who were aware of it, by an oath, that as long as he lived they should never betray the fact. He seems in the end to have won a double reward by this action of his, for on the one hand, glowing with the love of the Lord, he showed to God the sign of his conversion, on the other, filled with the love of his neighbour, he compelled himself against his inclination to remain for his sake in a dress which he did not desire. For what way of life could he show more pleasing to God than that in which he neither neglected the help of his fellow-men nor diminished the perfection of his own life? And what way of life could be more valuable? For it was useful to many, and known only to God, who, according to the Scripture, so directed his purpose that, although He made him enter into marriage with Lia, He did not deprive him of the desired embraces of Rachel. [Gen. xxix and xxx.]

## 3

He easily found a means of hiding his tonsure. He shaved off his beard as though it were troublesome to him, since the hair from the back of his head hung down, and he concealed the tonsure on the top of his head by wearing a cap.[3] He wore clothes of skin above his linen ones, because both clerics and laymen are accustomed to use clothes of this sort.[4] But he never had two skin

[1] The interpretation was standard. See Jerome's *De Nominibus Hebraicis*, *PL*, xxiii, 781.

[2] I think Odo must have had the text in Rom. ii. 28-9, in mind, which says, "It is not he is a Jew who is so outwardly ... but he is a Jew that is one inwardly".

[3] The word used is *tiara*, which generally meant a mitre, and is now only used of the papal mitre, but it could also mean some sort of clerical cap. See Ducange.

[4] Duchesne (*ad. loc.*) quotes references to the use of skin garments by the Cluny monks in the time of Peter the Venerable (twelfth century). They must have done a good deal to ward off the rigours of cold in the unheated churches and the open cloisters.

garments at once. When a new one had to be got, he ordered the old one to be given away immediately. When he rode his sword was carried in front of him, but he himself never laid a hand on it. From early on he had a golden cross made for his belt, and he never rode a horse adorned with medallions. In ways like this it appeared how much he studied moderation and despised the trappings of his position.

## 4

AFTER he had freed himself from everything to serve God, he went to Rome to consecrate his possessions to the Lord, and assigned the notable property of Aurillac to the blessed Peter,[1] Prince of the Apostles, by formal will,[2] with as many additional properties as would suffice the monks he had decided to gather there for their whole income. For he very much desired to establish a monastic foundation in that place, where the monks might lead the common life with an abbot of their order. He assigned also dues to be paid each year at the tomb of St. Peter. And what he had conceived in

[1] In spite of the rather depressing account which Odo goes on to give of Gerald's efforts to found a monastery at Aurillac, he did in fact found one which lasted until the second half of the sixteenth century, when discipline grew relaxed and it was taken over by the bishop and turned into a house of canons. Towards the end of the tenth century it had a very eminent member in the person of Gerbert, perhaps the foremost scholar of his day, who eventually became an outstanding Pope as Sylvester II (999-1003). Gerbert, it is true, does not seem to have stayed long at Aurillac, but he certainly began his monastic life there, before going on to become, on the way to the papacy, Abbot of Bobbio and Archbishop of Rheims.

Mabillon printed a tenth-century chronicle of Aurillac which states that Gerald obtained from Charles the Simple the privilege that the monastery should be directly under the see of Rome (*Vetera Analecta*, Paris, 1675- , vol. ii, 237). According to the same authority (*Annales*, iii, 332) the second Abbot of Aurillac, John, obtained confirmation of this privilege of exemption from Pope John X (914-28). This must have been, therefore, after Gerald's death, which occurred in 909.

[2] A will of Gerald's is quoted in full by Duchesne (*ad. loc.*). This deals with the foundation of the Abbey of Aurillac, and the lands given to it, and is dated September of the seventeenth year of Charles (the Simple), that is 909, shortly before the death of Gerald therefore (see p. 165, *n.* 2). No mention is made in this will of the dues to be paid to Rome (see below in text), and Mabillon thought that the will referred to here by Odo was made earlier, at the time of the foundation, which he puts about 894 (see *PL*, cxxxiii, col. 705).

It may be noted that the extant will leaves a good deal of property to Gerald's nephew, Rainald, for his lifetime, but with reversion to the abbey after his death. It does not appear from this source that he left any property to Rainald absolutely as Ganshof supposes (see p. 121, *n.* 3).



the fervour of his heart he carried out according to plan, and by the favour of God he performed what he had decreed. When he got back he ordered quarrymen and masons to be collected from all round, and commanded the foundation to be laid for a church in honour of St. Peter. But Satan, envious of all good, by what device I know not, made the judgement of the masters to err. For they laid the foundation unsoundly and, when a great sum of money had been spent and the walls raised to a considerable height, the joining of the dressed stones suddenly came apart, and they fell to the ground. But Gerald was not unduly saddened by this. As it is written, *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad* [Prov. xii. 21]. For he had complete trust that, although the work would be retarded by this happening, the reward of the wasted effort would by no means be lost. He saw that this collapse came about with the permission of God, for it almost always happens that when anything pleasing is offered to God, it is carried through with difficulty. And certainly in natural things that which grows most quickly withers most quickly; that which grows with difficulty lasts longer.

## 5

THE season of Lent had arrived and the milder weather favoured the building operations. One morning after he had finished his accustomed prayers Gerald went out from the castle which overlooks the site, and when he had gone a little way, looking about here and there, he began to consider where he could best lay the foundations of a church. Eventually by the will of God he chose the destined place. So he ordered workmen to come once more and to set about making plans to start the interrupted work again. When they had begun, they were to carry on wisely and to build a church of suitable size and in rounded form,[1] such as his father had

[1] *Arcuato schemate.* This is evidently meant to refer to the rounded (bow-like) apse and arches of a Romanesque church. Excavations carried out in 1944 in the church of St. Gerald at Aurillac revealed part of what is certainly the church built by the saint himself. Sufficient was discovered to give the approximate plan and size of the church, which was built on the model of the ancient basilicas with a semi-circular apse. (Beaufrère, *L'Eglise carolingienne du bon comte Géraud*, Aurillac, 1945.)

formerly built in honour of St. Clement. For, as I have said, his father was a religious man, as befitted one descended from a religious stock.

## 6

WHILE he went on with building the monastery he was always turning over in his mind where to find monks of good character who would live in the place according to their rule. But when the rareness[1] with which they were to be found brought home the difficulty of his task, he became anxious and did not know what to do. Then he sent some noble youths to the monastery at Vabres,[2] where a fervent regular observance was growing up, that they might be trained in the rule with the community there. One of them still survives and he states, and also in writing, that he has himself witnessed those actions which I have ascribed to blessed Gerald. When these same youths were ordered to return, they became relaxed with a feminine softness through lack of masters, and neglected the rigour of their rule, and so the plan came to nothing. Compelled, however, by necessity he put one of them in charge of the rest. But when this man led a dissolute life, the man of God was much troubled, because he was not able to correct him, and he did not have another whom he could put in his place. When he saw him and his associates entering on the path of a corrupt life, sighing profoundly, he repeated that saying of David, *O Lord, defeat the counsel of Achitophel.* [2 Kings xv. 34.]

## 7

SOMETIMES he broke out in lamentation at the sight of men giving themselves to evil. In his disgust he sighed complainingly that these men were perishing through love of the world, that piety was failing and iniquity abounded, that innocence had almost entirely

[1] With this may be compared what John of Salerno has to say about Odo's own difficulty in finding a monastery of good observance (i, 22). That was some ten or more years later, and it would be more rather than less difficult when Gerald was trying to do it.

[2] The monastery was founded by Raymund, Count of Toulouse, in the twenty-third year of Charles the Bald, 866. It lay about twenty miles west-north-west of Toulouse.



departed from the hearts of men, and truth from their lips. He did not wish to be involved in their quarrels, but prayed that almighty God would bring peace to all, ordering Masses to be said, frequently repeating that saying of Ezechias: *O Lord, only let peace and truth be in my days* [Isa. xxxix. 8], and *There is now no saint; truths are decayed from among the children of men.* [Ps. xi. 2.]

## 8

HE hoped that the desire by which he aspired after heavenly things and despised those of earth might be a consolation to him, if he found some to share in it. Consequently his mind was in a turmoil day and night, and he could not forget his wish to gather a community of monks. He often spoke of it with his household and friends. He was so moved by his desire for this that sometimes he exclaimed, "O, if it might be granted me by some means to obtain religious monks. How I would give them all I possess, and then go through life begging. I would make no delay in taking the necessary steps." Sometimes his friends would say, "Are there not many monks to be found in these regions from whom you can choose a community at will?" But speaking with great vehemence he would reply, "If monks are perfect, they are like the blessed angels, but if they return to the desire of the world they are rightly compared to the apostate angels, who by their apostasy did not keep to their home. I tell you that a good layman is far better than a monk who does not keep his vows." When they rejoined, "Why then have you been accustomed to show such favours not only to neighbouring monks, but to those from a distance?", making little of his deeds, with his usual humility he would reply, "What I do is nothing; but if, as you say, I do anything, I am certain that He is true who promised to reward a cup of cold water given in His name [Matt. x. 42]. Let them understand what they are in the eyes of God. Certainly it is true that he who receives a just man in the name of a just man shall receive the reward of a just man [Matt. x. 41]." These and similar words of his make it clear that he despised the pleasures of this present life, that he burned with the desire of heaven, that he wished to leave all his possessions, if

there had been anyone to whom he could reasonably hand them over. The common saying that the will is taken for the deed is true. Whence it comes also that he who hates his brother is considered a murderer, and John the Evangelist drank the chalice of the passion [Matt. xx, 22] though he died in peace. If therefore the will is taken for the deed, Gerald is certainly not to be deprived of the reward promised to those who give up all things. [Matt. xix. 29.]

## 9

IT was against his will, therefore, that he was kept in the world. And although companions were lacking with whom he might renounce the world, he occupied himself entirely in a wonderful way with the work of God. To such an extent was he occupied alternately listening to reading and saying prayers, now with others now alone, that the marvel was how he could devote so much effort to this, and that he always wanted to say such a large number of psalms, especially as he got through much other business in between whiles. He was not obstinate in absenting himself unduly from necessary cases, but giving himself to these for a little as occasion demanded he soon hurried back to the sweetness of the psalmody. How reverent he was in church cannot be adequately expressed, for he appeared to be contemplating divine things and with rapt expression imitating that saying of the prophet *As the Lord liveth in whose sight I stand* [3 Kings xvii. 1]. To make this clear from an example: the festival day of our Lord's ascension had come round and he went to celebrate it, as it is a great feast, at the monastery of Solignac.[1] He would not suffer the Office of so great a festival to be recited other than solemnly, nor did he allow, as many do, the service to be shortened in celebration. The monks, therefore, came and prepared a throne and *prie-dieu* arrayed as was fitting for so great a person, and when he had come to this after visiting the altars, the brethren began to say the Office in a protracted manner, as the custom is. The count stood so lost in contemplation that he neither sat nor reclined,[1] or only very slightly, until it was finished, showing by the immobility of his body the devotion and constancy of his mind. With us it is not so, for we sing the divine praises before the face of God as though concealing the fact that we are praying, with a pompous voice rather than with simplicity of heart. And when the understanding of the mind ought to be in harmony with the voice, we make the voice keep pace with the quickness of the mind. But Gerald, recalling the saying of the Apostle, *to God we are manifest* [2 Cor. v. 11], so comported himself as in the sight of the Judge who sees all things.

[1] Not far from Limoges. The monastery is said to have been founded by St. Eligius at the time of King Dagobert (630-8). It was laid waste in the troubled times which followed, but was refounded by Louis the Pious, the son of Charles the Great. (Duchesne, *ad. loc.*).



## 10

THAT it might honour him in the sight of men, who honoured God before the wicked by carrying out His commandments—although the time of Anti-Christ is now at hand and the miracles of the saints ought to cease—the divine mercy, mindful of the promise which says *Whoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify* [1 Kings ii. 30], deigned to honour this His servant with the gift of healing. And the manner of healing was such, that although he refused through humility to lay hands on the sick, he nevertheless frequently helped them, although he was absent and was not desiring to do so. The sick used to steal the water with which he had washed his hands; and many were cured. That this may seem more credible it is right that certain persons should be called to mind. For a certain countryman near the monastery of Solignac had a son who was blind, and lamenting for a long time that he was oppressed by both blindness and poverty, he was warned in a vision that he should go to the count Gerald and bathe the eyes of his son with the water in which he had washed his hands. The man believed the vision, and coming made known the content of his dream. When the count heard this he was much afraid and troubled in his mind, and refusing to be so presumptuous said it

[1] This is the technical term for leaning back on the *misericord* of a choir stall. It might appear that Gerald had some sort of throne or faldstool on which it would be impossible to recline, but this position is contrasted with that of sitting. *In antipodium recubaret* is Odo's phrase. Ducange explains *antipodium* as the back part of monastic stalls *quae anteriori seu podio opponitur*, and Odo's phrase suggests our use of reclining.

was an illusion which had deceived the man and would deceive him, that he might attempt things which had not been granted. The man was in error in asking such things with a vain hope. The father, made anxious by the blindness of his son, burst forth in lamentations, and understanding that the holy man would not agree out of humility, pretending to go away he obtained the water from one of the servants. Returning home and invoking the name of Christ he bathed the blind eyes of his son, who received his sight. And another deed followed this one.

## 11

A CERTAIN boy in Aurillac was lame, and he was handed over to a smith to learn a trade by which he might live. Warned in sleep that he should beg the water in the same way, the smith, who had to obtain it, knowing that the man of God was very strict in this matter, did not dare to ask for the water openly, but got it secretly from the servants. He sprinkled the useless member with the water, and the divine power immediately restored it to its proper use. When the report of this fact became gradually spread abroad, it eventually reached the ears of the count. Struck by the strangeness of the event, he said it had not come about by his merits, but by the faith of those who had given the water to the smith. This had been kept secret from him, and unable to discover who had given it, he was moved to violent threats that no one should presume to do such a thing again, saying that if a serf did it he should be maimed, if a free man he should be reduced to servitude. For he feared nothing more than praise. And while he was kind to his enemies, he was severe to those who praised him.

## 12

AT Pousthomy,[1] a considerable freehold property of his, a blind woman received her sight from the water in which he had washed his hands. This became known to all, but was most carefully concealed from him for the sake of one of the servants who had given

[1] See p. 129, *n.* 1.



the water to the woman. For his people could not make light of the mutilation which he had threatened, knowing that he would not yield in the matter of punishment, if he caught the man who had given it.

## 13

AGAIN, he was staying at a chapel near the village called Crucicula,[1] when another woman, who was one of his servants, was given her sight by the water from his hands. When he learnt this he urgently interrogated the man, Rabboldus, who had given the water, found out that he had done it, and immediately dismissed him from his service. After a little time, however, a certain nobleman called Ebbo came to reason with the count, saying that perhaps he was acting against the will of God, when he neglected a grace given from heaven under the pretext of indiscreet humility, and sent away in sadness those whom he might have helped. It was better to give those who asked what they needed, since perhaps this grace was given to him for their sakes. There was no fear of pride, since he was not covetous of praise; nor of presumption, because those who asked for help had stated that they were divinely urged; and a special reason for granting it was that it had been proved by experiment that the gift of health asked from him had often been granted, though without his knowledge. He set all this out in a very reasonable way. But with sighs and tears Gerald replied that he feared it might rather be a deceit of the devil wishing to make use of the occasion to deceive him, and plotting to deprive him of the reward of any good he had done. At length, convinced by reason and by entreaty, he took back the man he had dismissed, and ordered the woman to be given twelve coins.

## 14

KNOWING that the condition of the mind is best preserved by alternate reading and prayer, he had the Scriptures read to him, as

[1] "Little Cross", *Croizette*. The place cannot be identified with certainty, but there is today a Croizette not far from Argentat in the Department of Corrèze, thirty miles west of Aurillac, which may well have been the place as Gerald's estates lay in that direction.

I have said. And so it was that he adopted the practice of having reading at his dinner, and this was not omitted even if guests were present. At intervals he graciously ordered the reader to stop, and to ask the meaning of the reading[1] from those who might know. When those whom he asked used to beg him rather to speak himself, he would reply clearly and knowledgeably, as one well versed in the subject, but in such a way as not to put his clerics to shame. When the meal was finished and the others had departed, he generally had those passages which were left over from the lessons recited in church read to him. While he was listening to reading no one easily presumed to break in on him for any reason, for according to the saying of Job he was terrible to those beneath him, and the light of his countenance fell not on the earth. [Job xxix. 24.] It is wonderful to recall his words and talk. When he spoke from a joyous mind his words were most pleasing, but when he spoke rebukingly, they seemed like goads and were feared almost more than mere words. He was slow to give anything, but when he had once given it, he did not take it back. If he heard a priest was of evil repute, he did not disdain his Mass, because he knew that the sacred mystery cannot be invalidated by a man who is a sinner. And whereas he judged the deeds of others severely or mildly as the case deserved, he held his own deeds to be of little value, and the less value he attached to them the more he commended them to the divine regard.

## 15

BECAUSE he gave himself wholeheartedly to the desire of heaven, his mouth was so filled from the abundance of his heart [Matt. xii. 34], that the law of God sounded almost continuously on his lips. For he had marked certain holy words which seemed to fit bodily duties. Thus, before he spoke in the morning he said: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips* [Ps. cxl. 3], and there were other sayings of this sort which he

[1] According to the Latin here it is the reader who is to ask the meaning of what has been read, but where the reading at meals is described in bk. i (ch. 15), it is Gerald who asks, and this seems to be implied here lower down. It seems more likely.



adapted to particular actions, for example when he awoke, when he got out of bed, when he put on his shoes, his clothes, or his belt, or certainly when he went on a journey or began any other action, so that in the words of the Apostle he seemed to do all in the name of the Lord [Col. iii. 17]. Sometimes when he happened to be sitting with few companions or alone, he meditated on I know not what for long in silence, and, bathed in tears, he sighed from the depths of his heart so as to shake his whole body; it was easy to see that his mind dwelt on other things and he found no consolation in the present time. His speech and his silence were such that his mouth declared the praise of the Lord [Ps. l. 17] and the meditation of his heart was always in His sight [Ps. xviii. 15].

## 16

His followers knew that he greatly desired to be a religious, but being a prudent man and realizing that those who set a high ideal before themselves only fall the more grievously when the love of the world corrupts them, he judged it better to remain as he was than to attempt so difficult an undertaking without tried assistants. If therefore one considers his desire, he was true to the monastic profession through his devotion to Christ. And it is indeed high praise for a man in secular dress to keep the rule of religious, as on the other hand it is a very shameful thing to follow the world in the habit of a monk. Since, therefore, as I said above, he had no brethren with whom it was good to live together in unity [Ps. cxxxii. 1], life on earth was irksome to him. But as, long ago, Noe's dove, not finding where she might rest, returned to Noe in the ark [Gen. viii. 9], so this man, amidst the waves of the world, retiring into his inmost heart, took his rest in the joy of Christ. He did not, like the crow, settle on the carrion of bodily pleasure, for his soul refused to be consoled with this life's glory, but took its delight in the memory of its God, and coming back to the sanctuary of the heart as though to the ark, gave voice to its joy. For he did not allow iniquity to dwell in his heart, fearing lest the Lord should be unwilling to hear him. Rather, the sins which human nature cannot escape and which, though slight to us, seemed great

to him, he was always careful to keep before his eyes, so that he might with confidence look to receive from the mercy of God forgiveness for the evil dispositions of his heart. And so his King and Lord mercifully directed his ways in His sight [Ps. v, 9], and kindly hearkened to the voice of his prayer [Ps. v. 3]. He took so much trouble always to have his lodging next the church that for many years he went to the oratory every night, except once on the feast of the Innocents on account of a journey. A number of clerics always accompanied him and with these he laboured at the work of God. All the ecclesiastical equipment necessary for the service was carried with him, and with this he performed the divine service with great care and reverence, especially on the festivals. For the night Office he used to come to the oratory a long time before the others, and when it was finished he remained alone. And then all the more sweetly as it was more in private he tasted the savour of internal sweetness. After a time he came out joyous and brisk, and either went to his bed or joined his household. He had established such a way of life that any wise man must have marvelled at the great grace which had come to him. He so clung to this manner of life in externals, that his servants knew how he would conduct himself at every season of the year.

## 17

He established a custom of going frequently to Rome.[1] It is said that he went there again and again; my informants are certain of seven times. For it is a quality of human nature always to wish to see the light, and being a spiritual man, he went to gaze spiritually on those two lights of the world, Peter and Paul. And since he was not yet able[2] to contemplate them directly, he often visited their tombs and shrines, and he made over his possessions to St. Peter. He made it a rule to go every second year to their tombs as a serf

[1] The close relationship which the Franks maintained with Rome dates from the reform of the Frankish Church by St. Boniface. It was no doubt strengthened after Charles the Great's coronation there, and seems to have been maintained throughout Carolingian times. (See Duchesne, note *ad loc.*).

[2] The text reads *quoniam ipsos necdum volebat intueri*, which does not make very good sense. The change to *valebat* is made without comment by M. Abel Beaufrère, *Enigmes d'Aurillac* (p. 26), and I have adopted it here.

PILGRIMAGES TO ROME



with ten shillings hung round his neck that he might pay them as a due to his lord.[1] Who can describe the devotion with which he performed this? He was so good to those in want, that his bounty hardly passed a poor man by, and they abounded in that place, for he was confident that he himself would be heard, if he heard the cry of the poor. He gave generously also to the monasteries that lay on the road, and the fame of his great generosity sounded far and wide, so that monks, as well as pilgrims and the needy who were his guests, used to inquire anxiously, at the time when the pilgrims to Rome are accustomed to pass by, if and when Count Gerald was coming. Even the Marruci,[2] the fierce inhabitants of the Alps, thought nothing more profitable than to carry Gerald's baggage through the pass of Mont Joux.[3]

## 18

Once when he was making this journey and came to the city of Asti[4] a thief made off with two of his pack-horses, but coming to a river he was not able to get them across before he was taken by Count Gerald's men. Having got back the pack-horses he took no action against the thief.

## 19

Another time when he was going that way he had a certain monk called Aribert with him, a man of great abstemiousness. For it was always a sweet companionship for him, when he found men of religious life, and he used to take great delight in their company. Now it happened on one occasion that there was none of the food[5]

[1] Mr. R. W. Southern points out that "the ceremonies of initiation into serfdom were often used to symbolize initiation into the liberty of religion" (*The Making of the Middle Ages*, p. 105), and he quotes this passage in illustration, though wrongly attributing the action to St. Gerard of Brogne.

[2] These were the Saracens based on Fraxinetum (St. Tropez) on the south coast of France, whence they had spread into the Southern Alps. (See p. 61, *n.* 3.)

[3] *Juga montis Jovina*. Duchesne in a note calls this Mont Joux, which I have put in the text, but the only place of the name I can find is in the Jura, and would hardly have been on Gerald's way to Rome. The Jou-sous-Monjou in the Department of Cantal, near Aurillac, can hardly be the place, as the Marucci would not have been found so far to the west, I think.

[4] About thirty-five miles east and a little south of Turin.

[5] *Pulmentarium* is the word used. According to Ducange this is anything that may be added to bread. He quotes the passage and connects the word with

which this abstemious man ate with his bread. The count asked carefully whether the servants had prepared the usual food for him, and when they replied that they had nothing except bread, he became most anxious, saying: "What has happened to us today? We have all we want to eat, and this servant of God will go short." It was an abstinence day; the time to wash hands had arrived, and Samuel, who tells the story, running to fetch the water, found a small fish lying gasping on the bank, which had jumped out of the water when it saw him. He caught it and returned joyfully to the count. "Look," he said, "God sends you this fish; for I found it lying near the water." "Thanks be to God", he replied. And while it was being cooked he went into his tent and kneeling down prayed for a while in tears. His character was such that he preferred nothing to Christ,[1] but rather devoutly returned thanks to Him for everything that happened. When he arose from prayer he cheerfully joined himself to the company. The abstemious man, however, sitting down at table with the rest, ate till he was satisfied, and since there was still a part of the fish left over, the count urged him, saying, "Why do you hold back, brother, from eating the little fish, you will have nothing else?" When he replied that he had already had enough, the count took some to try its quality. Finding it to be of excellent flavour he ate as much as he wanted, and to all those present he gave a morsel as a token of devotion.[2] All gave thanks to God, recognizing the divine gift both in the finding of the fish and in the amount which was left over. For it had been six inches long.

## 20

IN the same way, when he was going to Rome and arrived at the city of Tuscany called Lucca, a certain woman came up to him

the fish described lower in the text as jumping on to the bank. The fish does indeed seem to have provided the *pulmentarium*, but Odo's story would have had more point, if he had made this clear from the start.

[1] Cf. the *Rule* of St. Benedict, ch. 4, "To prefer nothing to the love of Christ".

[2] *Pro benedictione*. This was evidently what was more usually called a *eulogium*. It generally took the form of blessed bread given as a sign of union and charity. Cf. the *Rule* of St. Benedict, ch. 54, and the note in Abbot Justin McCann's edition (Orchard Series, 1952).



saying that she had been warned in a vision that he would give back his sight to her son. When he heard this he rebuked the woman, and setting the mule he was riding in motion, he fled, much disturbed. The woman asked everyone she could find how she might obtain the hoped-for benefit from the man of God. Perhaps it was one of the servants who told her that miracles had been worked by the water from his hands. But the count had been put on his guard by the woman, and whenever he washed his hands had the water poured out on the ground in front of him. Still she kept on following him, until he became less careful about the water being poured away. At length she obtained some without his knowledge and bathed the eyes of her blind son, who immediately received his sight. When, therefore, the holy man came back from the city, the woman presented him with her son, now able to see. And when all were praising this deed, Gerald went away silent and in tears, nor did anyone dare to refer to this or anything of the kind in his hearing.

## 21

WHAT I am going to relate is remarkable, and it may seem incredible, but I believe the two witnesses who assert it. They say that this same holy man was returning from Italy by the road which goes to Lyons from Turin. He had crossed the Alps, and the way led through some country which, they state, is without water. It happened too that the supply of wine ran out. There was no water, and, since the district had long been laid waste by the Saracens, wine could not be found there either, so the party began to suffer greatly from thirst. They tried as best they might to get over this part of the journey quickly, but they were short of servants and pack-horses, so the count had to order a short halt. The dispirited men threw themselves on the turf, while the pack-horses, driven by thirst, wandered in all directions over the grazing-ground. When one of the clerics, not wishing to continue the halt, went to collect and saddle them again, he found a little hole full of some liquid. He was very surprised, and wishing to find out what it was, stooped down. The liquid smelt to him like

wine. Greatly rejoicing, he ran back to the count and told him that he had discovered something like wine. "What, are you mad?" said the count: "I wish you might have found water. Where could wine come from here?" The cleric, however, taking a vessel, drew some of this liquid and brought it to him. That which was brought certainly had the colour and smell of wine. Then the count ordered his chaplains to take the cross and the reliquaries and to say the exorcism for the blessing of water over the hole with the liquid. Then he ordered that in the name of Christ they should find out what it was by tasting it. When they found it was wine the holy man joined them all in giving thanks to God with great admiration and joy, and before he drank himself, he ordered it to be given to all the others, but he did not allow any of it to be put into flagons. I have related this on the word of those who say they saw it. Nevertheless, those things which now happen at his tomb persuade one to believe everything that one hears of him.

## 22

THE holy man often took this road [to Rome]. It was not that he wished to approach the palaces of kings, or the halls of marquises, and certainly not the assemblies of princes, but it was the heavenly rulers Peter and Paul, as I said before, that he was on fire to see more frequently. But he sought out too with keen devotion other holy places, namely the tomb of the most holy Saint Martin, and of St. Martial.[1] I believe he saw in contemplation how the ranks of the blessed rejoice in the court of heaven. With those to whom he was soon to be joined he had to some extent a foretaste of the joy of his Lord.

## 23

ON the other side of Sutri, next to the town, there is a rushy field called Saint Martin's, where the Roman pilgrims are accustomed

[1] We have seen much about the tomb of St. Martin at Tours as a place of pilgrimage in John's *Life* of Odo. St. Martial was a Bishop of Limoges in the third century, though an early legend enshrined in an eleventh-century *Life* makes him out to have been a disciple of our Lord. Great devotion was paid to him at Limoges.



to camp.[1] The servants had put up the tents there, and the count happened to be standing alone, when a blind man had himself led up to him. Begging suppliantly he asked if he would deign to give him some water which had touched his hands. The count ordered him to remain where he was and be silent. Then he went into his tent and prayed for a little time before the relics of the saints. The servants were going about their work, and while they were occupied, seeing that he could be unobserved, he called up somebody to lead the man in unnoticed. Then he carefully washed his hands, and soaked his fingers in the water, and made the sign of the cross over it with the holy relics. When the blind man poured it on his sightless eyes, he was immediately able to see. The man of God stopped him from crying out, and joined him in giving thanks to the divine majesty. He then clothed him with one of his garments, a tunic, and had him conducted in secret from the tents.

## 24

IT was the same when he came back from the city. He arrived one Saturday at a certain church, at the place where heaps of sulphur are to be seen.[2] When his people wished to go on the next day, he kept them back, saying that out of reverence for the Lord's day they should stay at least till None. And this delay was not without even a temporal advantage, for when the High Mass was over and they were setting out on their journey after having something to eat, a man came in mounted on a broken-down horse, who had got lost on his journey, and the Count Gerald ordered him to be received without charge to the resident priest. Before they had reached Abricola,[3] a blind man sitting by the roadside asked them as they passed, if there was anybody in the company called Gerald. One of our brethren, who at that time was still a canon, happened

[1] I think this must be the meaning in spite of the Latin—*scirposus ager habetur ultra Sutriam, juxta burgum videlicet, qui vocantur* [sic] *sancti Martini, quo Romei castrametari solent.* Sutri is the ancient Etruscan city between Rome and Viterbo, about twenty miles from Viterbo.

[2] There are sulphurous springs at Bagni di Stigliano near Manziana on this same road from Viterbo to Rome.

[3] Unidentified. There is a place called Abriola about five miles east of Salerno, but this incident is expressly said to have occurred on Gerald's way back from Rome. There is no evidence that he ever went south of the city.

to be travelling in Count Gerald's party, and out of devotion he was travelling on foot. Being weary he came up to the blind man, and to his enquiry about Count Gerald answered that he was following behind. "But why are you seeking him so earnestly?" he said. "I have been afflicted with blindness for nine years, and last night I was warned in sleep to come here and seek Gerald, the pilgrim of St. Peter, that I might ask him to wash his hands, and then pour the water on my blind eyes." When the cleric heard this, he stood still till Count Gerald came up. Now it was Gerald's custom to ride alone with his head covered that he might be more free to say his psalms. When he came up, therefore the cleric whispered to the blind man, "Here he is", and the latter asked him if he would mind stopping for a short time, and he added what he had been told in sleep. The count blushed, and with a changed countenance rejecting what he heard, started to go on. But the blind man, adjuring him strongly, begged him to stop and help a man in misfortune, and not to refuse the hoped-for benefit. Those who were present implored the same thing. But he deliberating a little, and remembering, as I think, that, according to the saying of the Apostle, he ought not to neglect the grace that was given to him [1 Tim. iv. 14], replied with his usual words, saying, "Help me, ye saints of God", and stopped. And since, as is usual among those small hills, a stream flowed by, water was forthwith brought. He dismounted and washed his hands saying, "The will of God be done." Then, much moved, he started to go on. The blind man did not delay in taking the water, nor did the outcome of the miracle fail him. He received his sight so promptly that he immediately ran after Gerald crying, "O holy Gerald, O holy Gerald, thanks be to God I see." But Gerald put spurs to his mule so as not to hear the cries of those who were praising him, and passed through Abricola, nor could his fellow-travellers catch up with him for two days! Indeed, it is not hard to believe that those hands through which this power of healing was conferred shone with purity and were without stain, and that every gift was shaken from them [Isa. xxxiii. 15]. On the other hand how unhappy are they whose right hand is filled with gifts [Ps. xxv. 10], for it is written that fire devours those who love to take bribes. [Job xv. 34.]



## 25

OTHER things are related of his journeying which I pass over for fear of being too lengthy, but let me add one, because it shows a miracle of another sort. On one of his journeys to Rome, when he was already in Italy, he heard the voice of a man crying out and announcing his death. It seemed to him that it was the voice of a certain Girbald whom he had left at home. So he called some of his followers and asked them if they knew anything of Girbald. They replied that he was sick when they left him. He ordered the time to be noted, and the psalms for the dead to be recited for him. When he came home and inquired about this man, he found that he had died on the very day that the voice had been heard.

## 26

AFTER his journey of devotion he liked to go to some quiet place, as though to fulfil that word of the psalmist which says: *I have gone far off, flying away; and I abode in the wilderness.* [Ps. liv. 8.] He wished to rest from the comings and goings of the world and the noise of the law-courts, that he might give himself more freely to the service of God. Now when he was staying for this reason at the chapel called Catuserias,[1] on the feast of Saints John and Paul[2] a certain countrywoman came into the garden to do some work or other, when suddenly a great drop of blood appeared on her hand, which immediately began to swell. The terrified woman ran lamenting to the man of God, and showing him her hand begged him to have mercy on her. He immediately ordered clerics to come and say Mass for her, and then to bless water and to wash away the drop of blood with it. He himself stood aside out of humility, lest the miracle should be attributed to his virtue. When the woman's hand was washed, the blood and the swelling disappeared, and she went away healed.

[1] Catus, about ten miles north-west of Cahors in the Department of Lot and some sixty-five miles south-west of Aurillac.

[2] These saints were martyred under Julian the Apostate about the year 362, and their feast is kept on June 26th.

27

BECAUSE that place, which I have said was dear to him, was remote and little-known, he often stayed there. On one occasion he had been celebrating the Assumption of the holy Mother of God, Mary, in this church, and after Mass he went out to his followers, for it was his custom after long-continued prayers to give himself to general conversation, so that anyone who had cause to speak with him might have the opportunity of doing so. When he had gone out among his people, therefore, the man who was in charge of the preparation of the food said to him: "We are very sorry, my lord, that we cannot find anything for your meal on this feast except salted meat." "Do not let that worry you," he said, "for if it pleases the Mother of God we shall not lack on her feast." He spoke, and from a rock which overhung the place a stag threw itself down. Rejoicing and lost in admiration the servants seized it, and from it, as the flesh of stags is tender at that season, they prepared a delicate meal for the count. And it should not seem incredible that the divine bounty provided him with food in this unexpected manner, because, acting according to the saying of the Apostle, he ate his morsel with the poor to the glory of God. [1 Cor. x. 31.] As those of his followers who are still here attest, he never turned his ear from the cry of the poor. The holy man, according to the saying of the psalmist: *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor* [Ps. xl. 2], when he heard the voices of those who cried out, used to sigh deeply and reply with words of compassion.

28

YOU knew Count Raymund, the son of Odo.[1] This man treacherously held captive Count Gerald's nephew, Benedict, who was

[1] This may have been the Count of Toulouse contemporary with William the Pious of Aquitaine. It was only a little more than a hundred years after this that the County of Toulouse was to become the centre of that fierce yet highly civilized society of which the lasting monument is the poetry of the troubadours, but its counts were already powerful men, and they were hereditary enemies of the dukes of Aquitaine. We know nothing of how Benedict came to be Viscount of Toulouse, nor of the cause of Raymund's hostility.



Viscount of Toulouse. But his brother, Rainald, gave himself up as a hostage and won him back his freedom. When Count Gerald heard that Rainald had given himself up in his brother's place, he did all he could to help his nephew. But Raymund delayed making restitution, secretly plotting to capture Benedict again and hold them both. Seven months had passed without the holy man Gerald's being able to make any progress in the rescue of his nephew, and one day he complained to his sister, Avigerna, about this: "Why do you cease to implore Christ for your son? Certainly, either we are lacking in faith, or what is more true, we do not deserve to be heard"—and he wept as he said the words. From that time on Gerald gave himself wholeheartedly to the Lord in prayer. And he also sent Abbot Rudolf to Raymund at once, but he was not able to make any headway and soon returned. But on the following night it seemed to Raymund that the holy man Gerald stood beside his bed and struck him with his hand, saying, "Why do you not listen when I ask so often? Know for sure that if you hold the hostage any longer, misfortune will come upon you." At these words Raymund woke up and was greatly terrified by the memory of the vision. He called his household and told them what he had dreamt. One of them, from whom up till then most opposition had come, was for some reason equally afraid, and urged him to grant Count Gerald's petition at once, saying that otherwise they would certainly die. Raymund immediately sent to the lodging of Abbot Rudolf and ordered him to come back. When he did so, he told him plainly how the man of God had terrified him in a vision, forthwith gave back the hostage, and humbly asked Rudolf to bring him back into the good graces of Count Gerald. So by the help of God Gerald prevailed, and according to the word of Scripture humbled the great ones of the earth. [Isa. xlv. 2.]

29

ONCE when he was going to meet this same Count Raymund and was approaching the river Aveyron,[1] someone happened to mention

[1] This river flows into the Tarn and thence into the Garonne not far from Moissac, in the country south of Aurillac.

that he had no fish to eat that day. While they were speaking of this those who were walking with the count saw a fish called a mullet[1] swimming towards them. One of them, who tells the story, threw out a cast-net and wounded it. When it was wounded it withdrew a little and then came again to the bank towards which it had been swimming, and there it remained till one of them put out his hand and caught it. It was of no small size. The holy man giving thanks to God tried to make the others, who were extolling the fact as a miracle, keep quiet; as though it had happened by accident. And perhaps someone may say that this could have happened by accident, but I think he will not remember having seen a fish in a broad river like the Aveyron rushing in to men on the bank.

## 30

IF it is rightly considered a miracle, either that a fish should have jumped out of the water, or a stag fallen unexpectedly from a rock, so should it that a fish in a river offered itself to be caught. But much more wonderful is something which the divine agency brought on another occasion to bring food to the man of God. Not far from the monastery of Figeac[2] there is a hamlet dedicated to St. Gregory, in charge of which was a certain priest called Gerald, who on account of his sanctity was a very dear friend to the man of God, and who before the end of his life went to live as a recluse. Gerald, therefore, on one occasion turned aside to visit this man, and after they had prayed together and kissed each other, he said, "What are you going to give us to eat, Brother Gerald? For we have come to have dinner with you." He spoke like this on account of the easy relations that this priest had with him. But with pleasure the priest replied, "If it pleases your piety, my lord, you shall not go away fasting. Nevertheless I have only bread and wine

[1] The Latin is *capito*. According to Ducange this seems to mean what we call a bull-head or miller's thumb, a small fish which is common in the rivers of France, but too small to be appropriate to the story. The grey mullet, *mugilida capito*, would seem a more likely species to play the part.

[2] In the Department of Lot, about thirty miles south-west of Aurillac. The text reads *Friacus*, but according to Bouange (i, 28) this is an error for *Fiaco*, which is the reading in a manuscript formerly preserved at Aurillac.

[Lots of Irish miracles – like Dialogues; mention]



to put before you, but I will see if by chance I can find some cheese or eggs." "Do not trouble yourself," the count said, "because it is an abstinence day and it will be good for us to eat more sparingly on this occasion, since there is nothing to provide a banquet." The priest hurried away to prepare, and going into his inner room he saw a fish lying on a plate. Astounded, he asked his servant privately who had brought it. The servant replied that he did not know, and said that nobody had been there who could have done so. The priest, therefore, going out to the count asked him if he would mind coming in to his inner room, and when he followed him in showed him the fish. Astonished and full of admiration, Gerald joined the priest in giving thanks to God. But he bound him and his servant, nevertheless, under oath not to betray this fact to anyone during his lifetime. But gradually the fact did become known to many, for the divine dispensation, which glorifies holy men, sometimes makes them known against their will. Truly the Lord is still mindful of His promise and does not deprive of all good those who seek Him [Ps. xxxiii. 11]. For the rest, this should not seem incredible, since we often read that God has deigned to supplement the food or the drink of his servants miraculously.

## 31

NOT far from Aurillac in a district called Marcolez,[1] there is to be found a naturally round stone. On one occasion when Count Gerald was passing through the district, one of his followers called Adraldus told his companions that he could jump on to the top of the stone, and he forthwith did so to the amazement of all. But it was said that this Adraldus had a knowledge of incantations and magic. When the count came up, those in front stopped and pointed the jump out to him. He thought that it could not possibly have been made by any natural agility, and raising his hand he made the sign of the cross. After that the man, though he tried many times, was quite unable to jump on to the stone. And so it was manifest that this activity of his was the result of an incantation, which

[1] *Marculiscus*, clearly, I think, to be identified with Marcolez, which is about ten miles south of Aurillac.

could no longer aid him after the sign of the cross, and that the power of Count Gerald was great, since the power of the enemy had no force against his sign.

## 32

SINCE I have related this about his making the sign of the cross, let me add something else that he did in this way. It was the feast of St. Laurence and he was keeping it in a certain chapel not far from Argentat.[1] Now one of his serving-women there was grievously afflicted. Since he had already prayed for her, and in the midst of the people, as she was, she was still mouthing and raving, they asked if the man of God would deign to make the sign of the cross over her. Out of his usual humility he was unwilling to do this for a long time, but as she never stopped raving, and those who were present asked more insistently, he at length raised his hand and made the sign of the cross over her, and she, vomiting forth blood and matter, was straightway healed. When all were sounding the praises of God and glorifying His servant, Gerald ordered them with many reproaches to be quiet, saying that they should glorify God alone, and St. Peter whose church it was. For it is that same church at which he was stopping when the blind woman mentioned above[2] received her sight from the water in which he had washed his hands.

## 33

A MAN called Herloard fell from his horse and badly damaged one of his knees. The pain was such that for six days he went without eating. Not being able to find a remedy he sent to Capdenac[3] and had some of the water from Count Gerald's hands secretly brought to him. Wonderful to relate, as soon as he had sprinkled this water on his knee, he got up cured and free from all pain. Other things are told of him which deserve both to be related and admired, but

[1] About thirty miles west of Aurillac. The chapel may possibly have been that of Crucicula, cf. p. 143, *n.* 1.
[2] Ch. 13 above.
[3] Some thirty miles south-west of Aurillac.



because they rest on common report and not on the four witnesses I mentioned, I prefer to keep silent about them, for I am not ignorant that he did many things which none, or few, know about. Like all pious and good men he was careful always to guard humility as the apple of his eye, and for that reason, as far as he could, he concealed his good works. But of those which became known against his will he would hear no praise.

## 34

LET this suffice for his miracles, and it may satisfy those who assess the glory of a saint not from the amount of his good works, but from the number of the signs which he performed. To such as these perhaps his sanctity would have seemed less, if they had heard nothing about the miracles which he did in his lifetime. But the righteous works which he performed will be more pleasing to those who are held by his holy love, and who revere him with a discerning admiration. But since both are to be found in him, namely a holy justice and the glorification of miracles, they honour him with a more secure and lively devotion. If he had happened to have the spirit of prophecy, no one, I think, would have denied that he was a saint. But he accomplished more than this, because he conquered avarice. For what profit was it to Balaam that he prophesied so profound a mystery, when he was rejected on account of avarice? [Num. xxii-xxiv.] Do not look for any great miracle in Gerald, therefore, because this is he who did not put his hope in money or in treasures. [Ecclus. xxxi. 8.] This is he, who, as I have said, did wonderful things. So rarely will you find one who does not put his hope of happiness in riches, that on account of that very rarity the divine word must have interposed. Who is such a one? When he is found he is worthy of praise, and as the text goes on, we will praise him for he has done wonderful things in his life. [Ecclus. xxxi. 9.] There is much evidence for the wonderful things which Gerald did. For it is well known that he preserved those things which were given him by his parents and by kings, so that he might dispense them not as to servants but as to masters, that he increased his property without injuring anyone,

that he laid up treasure for himself in heaven, that he was exalted in power but nevertheless remained poor in spirit. For this reason it should seem neither wonderful nor unbelievable, if, as the text goes on, his goods were established in the Lord [Ecclus. xxxi. 11]. Although by far the most outstanding of his deeds is that he preserved his chastity to old age. For it is chastity alone which imitates the purity of the angels. Since, therefore, he overcame lust, which is Satan's chief weapon, it is not remarkable that he had power over Satan, whom he conquered in preserving chastity. It is not incredible that he who cast the Prince of Mammon out of his heart by overcoming avarice now frees those who are possessed by devils. Rightly is the spirit of pride now subject to him, who at the very summit of earthly power showed himself humble.



## Book III

### *Preface*

Since what I have already said has shown clearly that the venerable man, Gerald, was outstanding for the power of working miracles, it remains now for me to describe by way of conclusion how he gave up his spirit from its bodily habitation. It is beyond doubt that, although he had brought his bodily appetites into subjection through spare living, he had great vigour. Nor, when his strength failed, did he lack fortitude. But when, in view of his age, the time approached for him to be freed from the service he had faithfully performed, he began gradually to lose his accustomed vigour. The fact was not hidden from him, and indeed the loss of his strength made it clear that he was failing. When he looked around at the many who were habitually in close attendance on him, he began to speak with deep sighs and failing breath: "Alas, my poor followers and most dear friends, do you not see that I am without my former strength? Know that the time of my death is approaching, when my spirit at the will of its Creator will be transferred to its destined habitation, and weak nature will return to dust." Suffering and weakness did not keep him from his usual abstinence. It is a remarkable thing, but the feebleness which normally takes possession of old people was not able to move his indomitable spirit out of its usual course. The weakness of the flesh was by no means able to relax the strictness of his mind. While, therefore, the soul was increasing in virtues, his bodily strength was ebbing away. But since, thinking meanly of himself, he did not recognize his own virtues, he did not rightly understand whence his bodily weakness sprang. For the power of the spirit, which was always growing in him, had almost cut off his bodily strength. And indeed this is the way with the saints, for the divine power would have been less strong in them, if the bodily power had not grown weaker. So Daniel, seeing the vision of angels, was sick for many days [Daniel x. 8], and Jacob became lame when he wrestled with



Gerald's death

an angel [Gen. xxxii. 25]. For he who is filled with spiritual grace is deprived of bodily strength. So the exterior man failed, while the interior was renewed from day to day.

1

ONE day he was in the castle which overlooks Aurillac, and looking at the monastery he wept copiously. When one of his followers asked why he wept, he replied, "Because I can by no means bring into effect the desire which I have long had for this place. For here is my resting place, here will I dwell [Ps. cxxxi. 14]. By the help of God I have easily provided all those things suitable for the use of monks; only the monks are missing; they alone could not be found, and so alone and bereaved I am worn out with sorrow. Nevertheless I hope that Almighty God in His own good time will deign to fulfil my desire. Nor is it strange if I, a sinner, am left with my desire unfulfilled, since King David was forbidden to build the temple of the Lord, while God provided the one who was to carry out the work after him [3 Kings v. 3]. And though I may not see it in my lifetime, the mercy of Christ will grant what I long for when it pleases Him, for you know my desire that the walls of this house may be too narrow for all those who will come to it." How he came to this knowledge he did not say. But seeing the place full of people as he foretold, those who know him to have made the remark have formed the opinion that he was inspired to say what he did by the power of God. For truly his mouth was filled from the abundance of his heart [Matt. xii. 34], that the law of God might ever resound in it. For the rest, according to the example of David aforesaid, he foresaw all that would be necessary for the future inhabitants, and took care to provide for them in relics of the saints, ornaments and vestments for the church, and in the produce of the fields.

2

AND truly, as the Scripture says that he who is holy shall be sanctified still [Apoc. xxii. 11], it was fitting that this man of God should be brought to naught through suffering before his death.



To him it happened as to blessed Job and Tobias that he was chosen to be proved by trial. And so for seven years and more he lost the sight of his eyes. But so sharp-witted was he that it was unbelievable that he suffered from blindness. He not only did not grieve over this affliction, but even rejoiced in the Lord that He had deigned to scourge him. For he knew, indeed, that not every one who is chastised is a son, but nevertheless there is no son who does not suffer the rod. And this was a consolation to him, that the Judge on high should raise His hand to strike him, and that his sins, without which no man may live, should be punished in this life. For assured of the mercy of the Lord, he trusted that He would deign to free him whom He had deigned to afflict in this life from everlasting chastisement. If it had been possible to add to his previous practices, the more he retired from exterior activity by reason of his blindness the more attentively he gave himself to prayer. In proportion as he was not able to gaze on the face of the world, by so much he contemplated more clearly the true light of the heart. Outside business ceased, and he applied himself entirely to the practice of prayer and reading.

3

TWO years before he died he had the church solemnly consecrated. So many relics of saints[1] were enclosed within the altars that those who knew the number were amazed. To those who only know by hearsay it may seem incredible. For this holy father set himself to collect them from all sides, whenever opportunity offered, during his whole life. He obtained them at Rome and everywhere, for he was pleasing in speech and manner, generous in the price he paid and, what is more, supported by divine grace in whatever he undertook. It is known that in obtaining relics he often gave precious tents and well-conditioned horses, as well as great sums of money. He placed the tooth of St. Martial at the

[1] Something has already been said in the introduction (p. xxii) about the attitude to relics at this time. It is interesting to note that Gerald had no inhibitions about paying for them, a characteristic which he shared with his contemporary, St. Gerard of Brogne and all the men of his time. (See Sackur, vol. i, p. 123).

right-hand side of the altar with the relics of St. Martin and St. Hilary. None of the benefactors had been able to loosen this tooth from the holy man's jaw, though they had long tried, but after praying he withdrew it at once. In connexion with this same altar a marvellous thing happened on the day of the consecration. Crowds of people were pressing around and a boy took the covering from it to give to one of the ministers. Those who were standing near told him not to do so, but he did not let go of it, and was forthwith seized by violent pains. First the skin came off his hands, then gradually off his whole body, so that he had scarcely recovered in six weeks. Gerald, as he had formerly decided, handed the church over to the control of monks, of whom up till then few were living there.[1]

## 4

WHILE he still lived he took the greatest care to ensure that he should leave all those dependent on him in peace, lest any occasion of strife should arise among them. The farms and estates which he had not handed over to St. Peter[2] he left to relations and soldiers, and even serfs; to some of them in such a manner that after their death they should return to Aurillac. At this time he only gave their liberty to a hundred serfs, but they are innumerable whom he emancipated at different times and places. Many through their love of him refused their liberty and preferred rather to remain as his serfs. It shows how mild a dominion he exercised over them that they sometimes preferred being his serfs to being free. He was warned by some of his followers that as far as concerned his household, and it was very large, he should not free a greater number from the yoke of servitude. "It is right", he said to these, "that the civil law should be observed in this, and therefore the number appointed in that law should not be passed." Let this be told that hence it may be clear how closely he adhered to the divine precepts, when he submitted in this way to legal and human ones.

[1] See page 136, *n.* 1.

[2] See p. 136, *n.* 2.



## 5

WHEN the time of his departure drew near he was staying at Cezerviacum,[1] a certain church which belonged to him, dedicated to St. Siricius. More than usually full of compunction he sighed profoundly, so that it was evident that his heart's desire was elsewhere and that he would never have consolation in the present life. Tears were mingled with the sighs, and with eyes raised to heaven he prayed that he might be freed from this world, repeating often the invocation *Help, ye saints of God.* This expression had always been familiar in his mouth, and it was what he was accustomed to exclaim at any unexpected event. Not long after this he lost much strength by a convulsion, and the strength of his limbs and the harmony of the whole body gradually disappeared. Knowing that the time of his dissolution was at hand he ordered Bishop Amblardus[2] to be called that he might fortify him in death by his prayers, and that the pastor might hand over the sheep seeking the pastures of paradise to Christ the Pastor of all. Meanwhile, with his faculties clear and no lack of memory, he arranged everything necessary for his funeral and the needs of those he was leaving. When swift fame suddenly spread all around the rumour that the man of God, Gerald, was near his end, men came together as though lamenting a common loss, crowds of clerics and monks with nobles mingling among them, groups of the poor, and people from the countryside; all these by their lamentations incited the grief of others. They broke out into sighs and tears as though they had a grievance. They raised their voices in lamentation over his piety, his charity, his care for the poor, his protection of the weak.

[1] According to Bouange (*Histoire de l'Abbaye d'Aurillac, précédée de la vie de Saint Géraud*, Paris, 1899, vol. i, p. 163, *n.* 3) this is Saint-Cirgues in the *arrondissement* of Figeac (Lot), about twenty-five miles south-west of Aurillac. The church mentioned below as already dedicated to St. Siricius in St. Gerald's time has given its name to the place.

[2] Bishop of Clermont (Mabillon, *Acta O.S.B.*, vol. vii, p. 9, *PL*, cxxxiii, col. 708). He died in 912, and the fact enables us to place Gerald's death between that year and September 909 when he made his will (see p. 136, *n.* 2). Mabillon points out that according to Odo Gerald died on a Friday, and the 13th October (the date on which his feast was kept at Aurillac and throughout Aquitaine) fell on a Friday in the year 909, which seems satisfactorily to place Gerald's death in that year.

In tears some declared, "How great a comfort is the world losing", others, "O Gerald, rightly called good, who will help the needy as you have done? Who will be a father to orphans or the defender of widows? Who will give such comfort to the sorrowful? Who will use your great authority on behalf of the poor? Who will consider the necessities of individuals and help them as you did? Most indulgent father, how kind, how gentle you always were! You won the thanks of all; the fame of so great goodness drew to you the affections even of those who were unknown to you." Expressions of this sort, which a great sorrow usually elicits among the sighs, poured in with such deep lamentation that you would think these tears could never cease. So it went on each day until the end of his time on earth arrived. To the last he could not give up his custom of ordering alms to be given to all wishing to receive them.

## 6

TRULY I may call that man blessed and happy whose character was such that even on earth he did not lose the love due to his good works, and in heaven is received in the love of the saints. Truly he is happy who, although at the height of worldly power, nevertheless injured none, oppressed none, and against whom none brought the smallest complaint. For if Nathanael is called a true Israelite because guile was not found in him [John i. 47], rightly may I call this man an Israelite whom, in the words of blessed Job [xxix. 11], the ear that heard blesses, to whom the eye that saw gives testimony. When, therefore, all were mourning, he alone continued joyous, as one indeed who knew that the splendour of the noon-day shall arise in the evening for those who hope in the Lord [Job xi. 17], and when He has given them sleep, this is their inheritance. Therefore, although the flesh might fear on account of its mortal state, the spirit, confirmed in the sight of glory, exulted, trusting that it would now receive in fact the hope so long desired. For as it is written that the just man has confidence in his death [Prov. xiv. 32], so you would judge that he was confirmed in hope and had no fear of death. He seemed joyous therefore, since not the slightest word betrayed that he feared. During



the whole time of his illness he forced his failing limbs to the divine service, so that he would not allow the night Office to be celebrated once except in church. Placed before the altar he always heard both the Mass of the day and a black Mass. And indeed when his limbs became too stiff and he was no longer able to walk by himself, the fervour of his spirit was such that it forced the body to be carried by the hands of bearers to the oratory; moreover, as if extending the tunic of good works to the heels, he sang the praise of God's might to the end.

## 7

AT dawn on a Friday, feeling himself grow worse he ordered his chaplains to recite the night Office in his presence, while the bishop was reciting it in church with his. He himself sang the psalms with the others, and after Lauds he finished the day Hours also. Then as he came to the end of Compline he armed himself with the sign of the cross and adding the expression so long familiar to him—Help, ye saints of God—for the last time, he closed his eyes in silence. Seeing that he had ceased to speak, those who were present called the bishop. They clothed his holy limbs in sackcloth, and while the rest were singing the psalms for the dying, one of the priests celebrated Mass and brought him Holy Viaticum. Some were saying that he was already dead, but he still retained the use of his senses and opening his eyes showed that he was still alive. Then of his own will he received the body of the Lord for which he was waiting, and so that happy soul departed to heaven. It is as though the order of the day in the week symbolized his own situation, for it showed that the good work, which is proper to the number six, had been completed, and that he had passed on to the true Sabbath which signifies rest.[1] And he, as we believe, now sees what he craved for, now possesses what he hoped for. But to many his passing meant no little grief, and although it was relieved by a certain sweetness in as much as they knew that for him rejoicing

[1] The meaning is obscure in English, but we were told at the beginning of the chapter that Gerald died on a Friday, and in Church Latin Friday is *Feria Sexta* and Saturday *Sabbatum*; hence the symbolism of the number six and the Sabbath rest.

rather than grief was called for, nevertheless they lamented loudly that they were deprived of his companionship, the like of whom they did not hope to see again. They, because of their human nature, were sad, but the angels, as we believe, rejoiced. For if there shall be joy among the angels on one sinner doing penance [Luke xv. 7], how much more for this just man who grew old in performing works of virtue. Faith sees the joy of the Lord in which he is received by the angels, but this is hidden from the bodily eyes, which have only seen the body paying its debt of death; and it has not yet appeared how greatly the soul is glorified in heaven. Gerald dies therefore, but according to the saying of David by no means as cowards are accustomed to do, for his lot is among the saints. [Wisd. v. 5.] And if he fulfilled that saying of the psalmist, *But you like men shall die* [Ps. lxxxi. 7], nevertheless that applies to him which is said before, *I have said: You are gods and all of you sons of the Most High.* [Ps. lxxxi. 6.] The Evangelist bears witness: *We are sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be.* [1 John iii. 2.] Happy, then, Gerald who distinguished the precious from the worthless. After he had tasted how sweet the Lord is, he gave himself not at all to the pleasures of this life to the contempt of the Lord. Life on earth, which is precious to the reprobate, he held to be of little value, and death, which to them is the worst of evils, he found precious. Truly blessed is he whose days passed in sorrow and whose years in lamentation, because he has now experienced how great is the multitude of the sweetness, which the Lord has in store for those who fear Him [Ps. xxx. 20]. And even in the sight of men he demonstrates this to some extent by daily signs. How great is the difference between him and the evil rich! To him tears were as bread, and he took his drink with tears in full measure. [Ps. lxxix. 6]. These live their days in good things and have their consolation, according to the saying of the Gospel, in this life. But he with the voice of exultation has passed over to the tabernacle of God [Ps. xlii. 3]. Of them it is said that in a moment they are brought down to hell. [Ps. xxx. 18.] For the rest, even if anyone should be able to say anything worthy of his external way of life, none of us could, I do not say expound, but even touch, the meaning of the delights which fill him everlastingly in the right



hand of the Lord, unless perchance somebody feels in himself what it is to delight in the salvation of God.

## 8

BUT since God is wonderful in His saints, in whom we are commanded to praise Him, by the saying of Scripture, *Praise the Lord in his saints* [Ps. cl. 1], therefore, O blessed Gerald, as far as we can we will praise God for you. I will praise Him because He chose and justified you, because He made glorious His mercy in you [Rom. viii. 30], and led you by straight paths [Ps. xxii. 3], because He made known the fruit of your labour, and did not desert you even to old age, and what is more, because He counted you among the sons of God, and finally glorifies you in the sight of all. And because praise becomes the saints [Ps. xxxii. 1], to the glory of God I also praise you, because according to the saying of Jeremias you bore the yoke of Christ from your youth [Lam. iii. 27], and did not spurn the grace of His calling; because you did not give anything in exchange for your soul [Mark viii. 37], and did not receive His salvation in vain; because you did not expose the secret thoughts of your heart, which you conceived of the love of Christ, and did not fail in the hour of temptation; because you did not give yourself to the external joys of this life, and did not falter in doing good. But, nevertheless, do Thou, O Lord, pardon my presumption through him. For I fear to exaggerate in what I say, because I have attempted what I was by no means fitted to do. For although he in whom Thou art praised is worthy of praise, I, O Lord, am unworthy to give it, because *praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner.* [Ecclus. xv. 9.] Let Thy saints, therefore, bless Thee as it is written [Ps. cxliv. 10], and let Thy works confess Thee. But because Thine eyes see the imperfect being of the Church [Ps. cxxxviii. 16], and its stones shall have pity on the earth [Ps. ci. 15], we beg that those who on account of the solidity of their morals are called stones may deign to help us who, because of our wickedness, are earth; that we who have not the garment of justice may embrace the stones and be able to cover our nakedness with their merits. May this servant of Thine direct to us the loving mercy

with which Thy charity endowed him, and may he look lovingly from the eternal court of heaven, in which he resides among the heavenly rulers, into this vale of tears which he has left. May he hear the prayers of each, and with Thee may he meet the necessities of all, our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son assisting, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and is glorified, God for ever and ever. Amen.

9

SWIFTLY, as happens in the case of people of great virtue, the news of his death was spread far and wide. A vast multitude of men soon began to come together from all sides, nobles in great numbers, innumerable crowds of country people and the poor, many monks, and bands of priests. All of them mourned him with a brotherly and tender devotion, and wept for him with I know not what divine instinct of compunction and love, because they knew that he was pleasing to God.

10

WHEN his body had been stripped for washing, Ragembertus and other servants who were performing the duty put both his hands on his breast, when suddenly his right arm extended itself, and his hand was applied to his private parts so as to cover them. Thinking this had happened by chance they bent the hand back to the breast. But again it was extended in the same way and covered his private parts. They were amazed, but wishing to understand the matter more carefully they bent the arm back a third time and put the hand back with the other on his breast. Immediately with lightning speed it sought the same parts and covered them. Those who were laying him out, struck at once by admiration and fear, realized then that this was not happening without divine power. Perhaps it was being divinely shown that this flesh when alive was always anxious to preserve the modesty of chastity. They quickly covered the body, and when it had received a covering the hand no more stretched out.



11

WITH great crowds accompanying them his people carried the holy body to Aurillac, as he had ordered, and placed it under a stone monument on the left-hand side of the church—near and to the right of the altar of St. Peter.[1]

But let me bring this little book to an end lest it should displease both by its unpolished style and its length. If anything in it has pleased the reader, let him attribute that to the merits of the Count Gerald. Whatever is displeasing he shall put down to my lack of skill, but let him find in it nevertheless an occasion for forgiveness. And for this reason, and in view of the fact that I only presumed to undertake the work by order, I humbly beg that he may intercede for me with Him who judges the hearts of men.

12

FOR blessed Gerald it is more than enough that the faithful Witness in heaven, whom he always sought to please, recompenses him in paradise, but nevertheless this same Witness, Christ, deigns to manifest outwardly how great is the glory which he possesses within. For it is written that God renews His witnesses against us [Job x. 17], and whoever keeps His commandments is His witness against us, that we too are able to keep those same commandments but are not willing. For to speak of people like myself, we scorn to read all the sayings of holy men and neglect to imitate their example, while nevertheless we are tirelessly occupied with idle and worldly speech. But acting in this way we prove ourselves to be those of whom the Apostle says, *They will turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.* [2 Tim. iv. 4.] And so

[1] This is followed by a phrase—*et ipsum nihilominus in dextrorsum*—which as M. Abel Beaufrère (*Sépultures antiques du monastère bénédictin d'Aurillac*, Aurillac, 1944, p. 8, *n.* 8) says is evidently meant to give greater precision, but which *est si confuse qu'on n'ose pas en proposer la traduction.* The excavations in 1944 in the church of St. Gerald at Aurillac (p. 137, *n.* 1) disclosed what appears to have been a vault under the floor of the Carolingian church, and this may have been the crypt referred to in iv, 4, and the first burial-place of St. Gerald, but the evidence is still too fragmentary to permit of certainty. Beaufrère, *L'Église carolingienne*, pp. 12 and 22.

to reprimand somewhat our laziness and other manifestations of vice Christ, the Ruler of the Ages, raises this witness of His against us, making him glorious in our sight with many miracles, so that, because we close our eyes, as has been said, to the consideration of the example of holy men, we may turn our gaze to the splendour of this man, as to one resplendent with His own merits. In our own day he kept the divine precepts, but because the dead quickly depart from our hearts, we forthwith forget this, and not remembering the reward due to his good works we are sinfully slothful in imitating them. And for this reason He deigns to work miracles, which occur perhaps for a time, that so we may understand the glory which he has within, and may turn our minds to those recently performed works by which he attained that glory, and that we may strive to grow strong to imitate them. But now with the help of God let me say something of these same miracles, as may seem reasonable.



## Book IV

### 1

On the Sunday after his death he was carried to Aurillac, as I said, with great crowds accompanying him. While the choir was singing the psalms round the bier during the night, a certain noble called Gibbo placed his daughter, who was afflicted with epilepsy, under the bier, and afterwards she suffered no more from her infirmity. She is now the mother of a family and her perfect health bears witness to this miracle.

### 2

A certain man living on the estate called Grimaldus saw himself in a dream trying to lift the lid off the coffin. When he woke up he found his hands and arms from the elbow downward withered, so that he could do nothing with them. Remaining stricken like this for nearly a fortnight, he came as a suppliant to the tomb and was immediately healed.

### 3

The lunatic maid of a certain man called Lambert was warned in a dream that she should come as a suppliant to his tomb. She told this to her master, but he, fearing that it was an illusion and that he would be ridiculous, if no miraculous result followed the vision, forbade her. But warned a second and a third time in a vision she again asked her master to be allowed to go there, and this he now granted. The woman went, and after praying at the tomb departed completely healed.

### 4

In the meantime a little round plot of grass appeared before the crypt. Although the plot was covered with grass, the earth round about was bare and dusty. When those who passed through the

cemetery[1] saw the little plot and the dusty path which surrounded it, they were astonished, for they knew that neither man nor beast had trodden out the path. For a time it was there and then it disappeared. Next summer the same thing was seen in the same place, but much larger. There was a dusty path worn round as before. The third summer in the same way a round plot of grass surrounded by a dusty path appeared, but it was larger still. And thenceforth it was seen for many years gradually spreading itself outwards. Those who considered the cause carefully believed it to be some prodigy, and conjectured that the green circle was perhaps a symbol of the fame of the blessed Gerald full of the greenness of virtue. This fame spreads itself around among the people, who are barren of good works and are signified by the dusty circle, and makes them fertile by its good example. When for love of him they gladly undertake the labour of pilgrimages, when they offer gifts, and some of them return new men, they are like the circle extending itself forward and partly replacing the aridity of the circle of dust. Whether it really signified this the Ruler of all things knows, but it is certain that nothing is done on this earth without a cause.

## 5

THERE was a certain cleric of good name who lived in the city of Rodez. This man, if faith is to be put in dreams, saw the following vision. There was as it were a high place from which a great light shone forth, and four steps led up to this light. Before the first step was a footpace of iron, before the second one of brass. The third had a footpace of silver, the fourth of gold. He saw two men, glorious in appearance and dress, come to the first step, and they were followed by two more who were leading a third between them by the hand. It was revealed to the cleric who saw this that the first two were St. Paul and St. Martial, the two who followed

[1] It is of interest that in 1939, when some gardens were being laid out adjoining the church of St. Gerald at Aurillac, a large number of stone sarcophagi were found lying close to the present church, and in 1944 several were found under the floor of the existing building, but outside the walls of the Carolingian church. (Beaufrère, *Sépultures*, and *L'Église carolingienne*, p. 13).



St. Peter and St. Andrew, but the third whom they were leading was St. Gerald, whom the cleric had not known in this life. But when afterwards he described the figure and face he had seen, those who had known Gerald recognized the likeness. When these had come to the first step they appeared to recite a psalm, after which St. Peter said a collect to which the others replied Amen. This was done a second, a third, and a fourth time. With the others still standing St. Peter went towards the bright light mentioned above, and having prostrated himself on the earth lay for a little while in adoration. Then he got up and prostrated three times, and a voice replied from the light asking what he wanted. "Lord," he said, "I beg Thy mercy for Thy servant Gerald." And then one, I know not who, holding a book, seemed to recite his life story. When he had been reading for a little time the cleric was only able to distinguish the words, *He that could have transgressed and hath not transgressed, and could do evil things and hath not done them.* [Ecclus. xxxi. 10.] Then the voice was heard to say, "Do what you will with him", and a sceptre was brought forth and given to St. Peter, and he had the power of raising Gerald with it. The cleric heard the voice of Him who gave, but saw only the sceptre. Then St. Peter returned rejoicing to those who were waiting, and a steep path leading up to heaven appeared at the place where they were standing. St. Peter, taking the beloved of God, Gerald, by the hand and beginning to go up the steps, intoned in a loud voice *Te Deum laudamus*, and so singing they departed into heaven with him.

And another sign from his tomb followed this vision.

## 6

IN the seventh year after his death the coffin[1] began gradually to rise above the ground, but the earth which surrounded it did not seem to be either raised or depressed. Those who dwelt in the place had not yet noticed this, but a certain cleric coming from the

[1] *Sarcophagus, qui usque medium cooperculi terrâ contusa calcibus fuerat contactus.* It is impossible to get a satisfactory rendering of this passage, and I have omitted it. The general sense does not seem to be affected.

district of Limoges asked the monks whether the coffin of Count Gerald had come out of the ground, and added that he had been warned in a dream to come to his tomb, because his coffin had begun to appear. Then the monks going with him to the tomb and taking away the hanging with which it was covered found all as the cleric had seen in his sleep. At that time it stood out a little, now considerably more. Whoever knows this cannot but be aware of some divine power. After this miracles began to occur frequently.

## 7

THE feast of the Circumcision had come round, and a certain vassal called Adraldus ordered a witch's fire to be kept all night in his house. But in the dead of the night demons attacked the guardians of the fire and did such harm to them that they killed one and deprived the other of the use of his limbs. Afterwards this man, who eked out his living by begging, was carried to Aurillac. When a few days later some lawless men made an attack upon the place, and the monks began to sound the alarm and to recite litanies, the maimed man begged that those around him should carry him to the tomb of Count Gerald. When they had done this, he prayed that the saint would deign to help him, and in a short time he arose healed, and with all his limbs instantly restored he had his full health. Miracles followed and the fame of Gerald's virtues became more widely and better known. If anyone doubts the facts, for in the sick the same things are often repeated, he can put them to the test with his own eyes and so gain credence of the past. I omit what the divine mercy often deigns to repeat in those who are afflicted by various diseases, for fear of being too long, but I have touched lightly upon some things which redound to the glory of this blessed man, lest I should seem to have passed over them thoughtlessly.

## 8

IT is known that this same holy man in his lifetime brought many relics of the saints to Aurillac. Indeed, as was said before, he was



most assiduous in this cause, and he had no small help from God to obtain what he wished. Among other relics of the saints which were there is a certain relic of the True Cross which was known by frequent trial to have such power that if a man who was carrying it rode on horseback, the horse shortly died, or if he perjured himself he became an epileptic. Not a few became epileptics on account of this sin. The inhabitants of that region had truly ferocious habits,[1] but gradually by his example and the reverence they have for the holy man they seem to be gentler. When they make any agreement or solemn oath in law they have the relic brought by some monk or cleric, who, however, comes on foot.

## 9

SOME disputing rashly about the glory of St. Gerald assert that this grace of healing was conferred not through his merits, but through the power of these relics. Considering the case carefully, I believe that the benefits of health are conferred through the holy relics in such a way as not to deny the co-operating virtue of St. Gerald. The nature of the things which happen suggests this, for he himself is accustomed to appear in a vision to the sick, and the benefit of health is especially conferred before his tomb, as happened in the case of the son of John, the Viscount of Auvergne. Bringing the boy, who was deaf and dumb and had a withered hand, the father prostrated himself before the tomb and gave himself to prayer. In the middle of the night blood burst forth from the child's ears, and reaching out his hand he put it healed round

[1] *Mores valde ferinos habere solebant.* I think this means a good deal more than that they were uncouth; they were dangerous. In a semi-suburbanized England it is difficult to imagine what the inhabitants of the Frankish kingdoms must have been like in Odo's day, but we get some idea perhaps when we read about the people who murdered an English family, the Drummonds, who stopped to camp for the night in a lonely district of Upper Provence in 1952. The French poet and *littérateur*, Jean Giono, has written an illuminating essay (see Bibliography) on these descendants of mixed races (including the Marruci) who inhabit the mountainous March country between France and Italy. Admittedly this is not the district to which Odo is referring in the present passage, but it is one which was well known to him and Gerald on their journeys to Rome. Its inhabitants, who, as M. Giono tells us, in their little walled towns have interbred for a thousand years, untouched by those who hurry through on their way to the Côte d'Azur, would appear to have changed remarkably little from Odo's day, and doubtless at that time their type of behaviour was more widespread.

the neck of his father, and speaking for the first time he asked for bread. The church was filled with the voice of the father giving thanks for his son, and he made over a freehold property of his to the saint. I mention names in this case because the miracle, being performed for a person of standing, came to the notice of many. Different miracles, or those of another kind, were noted by the inhabitants, but since the number grew very great no care was taken to keep count.

## 10

In the castle of Aurillac there was a mounting-block before the doors of the church[1] from which he used to mount his horse. The sick who kiss this for love of him recover their health, and for this reason the inhabitants have now moved it into the church and covered it with a hanging like an altar. Not far from the town which the country-people call *Mulsedonum*[2] the man of God had a small country-house. Some citizens of the town agreed together that they would take his table, which was still there, to eat their meals off, and this they did. The bearers chanced to set it down in front of a certain house, and in the middle of the day a man tried to go to sleep on it, but he was immediately struck blind and senseless, and when a dog jumped on the table it immediately became paralyzed. Nobody realized as yet the cause, and someone else threw himself on the table, but he too was immediately struck blind. Understanding at length that these things were happening because the table had been consecrated by the many meals of the holy man, they carried it covered with a linen cloth into the church of St. Martin which is near by, and it is to be seen there to this day suspended from the roof. A certain priest, with some of his neighbours, came to hold a feast on another of his tables which was in the village of *le bex*[3]. When they were chattering and making

[1] The church of St. Stephen stood on the north side of the castle with which it communicated by a staircase, traces of which are still to be seen (Bouange, vol. i, p. 90, *n.* 1). The church and doubtless other buildings would be enclosed within the wall or palisade.

[2] According to Bouange (vol. i, p. 32, *n.* 1) this is Monceaux, two miles from Argentat (Corrèze), and about thirty miles west of Aurillac.

[3] A few miles from Aurillac (Bouange, vol. i, p. 33, *n* 1).



jokes among themselves as is customary, suddenly a great fear struck them all, so that, stopping their jesting, they went to eat in another place. But the table they carried into an oratory[1] which had been built in a place where the bearers had put down the bier [of Gerald] to change the pall. (When some grazing cattle came on the little space where the bier had been set down they immediately began to be tormented and some of them died. The natives realized the cause of what had happened to the cattle, and built this oratory in the place.) It is certain that from that time many sick people recovered their health there. And moreover a remarkable and almost unbelievable thing happened, if experience had not proved it, for a little spring burst forth in that place sufficient for wayfarers to drink from.

## 11

While he was still living the man of God bound Rainald,[2] whom he suspected, by an oath, but Rainald broke his oath and with his followers greatly troubled the community which Gerald had assigned to the monastery. In the pillaging which they were suffering some invoked the name of Count Gerald, and one night it seemed to Rainald that he saw the man of God standing by him and demanding that he kept his oath, at the same time warning him to cease from troubling the community any more. Roused by the vision he told it to his wife, and she persuaded him that having been warned in this way he should keep the oath. Full of compunction, he related this in due course to his followers, ordering them, but in a half-hearted way, not to molest the community, but they in a short time returned to their accustomed rapacity. Nor did Rainald stop them, for he was prone to evil, and although he was a blood relation of the holy man, he was very far from having

[1] Bouange (vol. i, p. 33, *n.* 2) perpetuating what I suppose is a local tradition states that the oratory (or its successor) dedicated to our Lady under the title Notre-Dame-de-Grâces still exists in the hamlet of Bourgnioux, not more than ten miles from Aurillac.

[2] This is apparently the nephew (he is called a blood-relation below) whom Gerald had commended to William of Aquitaine (i, 32) and rescued from Raymund of Toulouse (ii, 28), but we have had no previous indication that he was unsatisfactory.

his piety. Then the holy man appeared to him again in a threatening manner, and full of anger reproached him with the good he had done to him, for which he had received only evil, and striking him on the head he threatened him with death to follow.

## 12

In the province which is called Alemannia[1] a certain noble was possessed by demons. His parents and retainers took him to many relics of the saints, that at least by their intercession the divine grace might liberate him. But the Giver of all goods, who had decreed to glorify His chosen one, reserved this miracle for him. The name of the blessed man had not yet been heard in that province, and when the parents took their son to the bodies of the saints, the demons often exclaimed that they would never go out of him but through the intercession of St. Gerald. The parents of the demoniac went in all directions to see if they could hear of the province in which St. Gerald was. It may have been one of the Roman pilgrims, or another, who told them the province and the place. They hurried to Aurillac and as soon as they came to the tomb the demons began to cry out through the possessed man, "O Gerald, for what reason do you make game of us? For what reason do we burn in your power?" Forthwith the man fell to the ground and spewed them out together with a quantity of blood. Ever after he remained sound.

[1] St. Gerald seems to have had a considerable local cult from the time of his death, and still has, though he is little known outside Auvergne. It is of interest, however, that churches are found dedicated to him in the French Alps (Bouange, vol. i, pp. 98-9) in the country that he must have gone through on his way to Rome, and in which Odo tells us that he was well-known (ii, 17). Alemannia, lying well to the north in what is now south-west Germany and Switzerland, would not be likely to have heard of him. (See below in text.)

# INDEX